

Teaching L2 Composition

Purpose, Process, and Practice

Third Edition

**Dana R. Ferris and
John S. Hedgcock**



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Teaching L2 Composition

Third Edition

This popular, comprehensive theory-to-practice text is designed to help teachers understand the task of writing, L2 writers, the different pedagogical models used in current composition teaching, and reading–writing connections. Moving from general themes to specific pedagogical concerns, it includes practice-oriented chapters on the role of genre, task construction, course and lesson design, writing assessment, feedback, error treatment, and classroom language (grammar, vocabulary, style) instruction.

Changes in the Third Edition

- The term *ESL* to refer to student writers is replaced by the broader, more accurate, and current term *L2*
- Significantly revised chapter: Concepts in Writing and Learning to Write in a Second Language
- New chapter: Understanding Student Populations and Instructional Contexts
- New chapter: Composition Pedagogies: Theory, Principle, and Practice
- New chapter: Developing Language Skills in the Writing Class: Why, What, How, and Who
- Discussions of technological affordances for writing pedagogy are now woven throughout the chapters at appropriate points
- Reconfigured and streamlined content moves more methodically through instructional principles and practices, including a merger of two chapters on course and lesson design into one, and two chapters on teacher and peer feedback into a single integrated discussion of response to student writing
- A new feature, Further Reading and Resources, highlights in convenient list form the key resources mentioned in that particular chapter as well as other materials that readers may find helpful.

Dana R. Ferris is professor in the University Writing Program at the University of California, Davis, United States.

John S. Hedgcock is professor of Applied Linguistics at the Monterey Institute of International Studies, California, United States.

Preface

In keeping with the approach that we took in this book's first two editions, *Teaching L2 Composition: Purpose, Process, and Practice* aims to present practical approaches to the teaching of second language (L2) composition in light of current theory and research on L2 writing processes, practices, and writers. It should appeal to the following audiences:

1. Teacher-educators and their students in pre-service TESOL and composition preparation programs;
2. In-service writing instructors currently engaged in teaching writing and related literacy skills to L2 writers, whether in designated courses for multilingual students or mainstream composition programs;
3. Writing program administrators who wish to learn more about contemporary pedagogies and meeting the diverse needs of multilingual writers;
4. Researchers investigating L2 writing and L2 composition pedagogy.

This volume addresses the needs of these diverse audiences by providing overviews of research related to L2 writing, as well as numerous opportunities to reflect on, develop, and practice the teaching skills needed for effective instruction of L2 writers. Preview and postreading questions in each chapter are intended to stimulate readers' thinking about the material presented and provide discussion prompts for those using the book in a classroom setting. Application activities at the end of each chapter offer hands-on practice for pre-service and in-service writing instructors and serve as resources for teacher educators. Because of the book's integrated emphasis on theory, research, and practice in L2 composition,

it is appropriate as a primary or supplementary text for courses focused on L2 writing theory, as well as practicum courses that emphasize or include literacy instruction as a focal point.

As a discipline, L2 writing has come a long way in the past 20 years. Indeed, there has been an explosion of publications (journal articles, edited collections, monographs, dissertations, and so forth) on an enormous range of topics related to L2 writing. Even for specialists, it is challenging to stay up to date. Thus, one of our primary goals in each edition is to furnish readers with a synthesis of theory and practice in a rapidly evolving community of scholars and professionals. Although all the topics discussed in the chapters are firmly grounded in reviews of relevant current research, we believe that the book's wide array of hands-on practical examples, materials, and tasks is what sets it apart from others of its kind. By summarizing and analyzing strands of theory and research in ways that are accessible to newer instructors, we have endeavored to help readers see the relevance of the field's knowledge base to their own classroom settings and student writers.

Changes to the Third Edition

The first two editions of this book were fairly similar to each other; in the second edition, we primarily sought to update and refine the material from the original volume. In contrast, this third edition includes substantial new material and some major changes to the volume's organizational structure. The first change is the title. Although it is highly unusual to make such a change between editions, we determined that the broader term *L2* was a more accurate and current descriptor than *ESL*, which was featured in the previous editions. Not all L2 writers are developing their skills in English; we have accordingly changed references from "ESL" to "L2" (or in some cases we refer to student writers as "multilingual") throughout the book.

Along with subtle changes to the title and terminology, we reconfigured material in certain chapters and added several new ones. Chapter 1, for example, introduces readers to writing systems and processes before delving into the unique challenges facing L2 writers. The chapter examines the role of prior knowledge and recent insights from intercultural rhetoric, which lay a foundation for subsequent chapters. We composed Chapter 2, "Understanding Student Populations and Instructional Contexts," because we recognize that the term *L2 writer* needs further definition: L2 writers are found in a broad range of educational contexts that are quite different from one another. Although we had briefly touched on these themes at various points in the second edition, we came to realize that this definitional and descriptive work is important enough that it warranted its own chapter. This decision also follows a pattern that we established in our coauthored book *Teaching Readers of English* (Hedgcock & Ferris, 2009).

We added Chapter 3, "Composition Pedagogies: Theory, Principle, and Practice," to acknowledge and explore the role of mainstream, or first language (L1), composition practices in the teaching of L2 writers. Teachers of L2 writing come from diverse academic backgrounds. Some are applied linguists who have had

little or no training in composition pedagogy but who nonetheless find themselves teaching L2 writing courses, whereas others are primarily trained as compositionists who may be well versed in composition theory but who need more extensive background in second language and literacy acquisition processes. Bearing in mind that most pre-service instructors do not have the time or opportunity to take extensive coursework in several different fields, we added this chapter as a quick overview of the major approaches to composition instruction.

The final new addition is Chapter 9, “Developing Language Skills in the Writing Class: Why, What, How, and Who.” Although our previous editions discussed error correction and grammar instruction in the writing class, we wanted to expand the discussion beyond reactive discussions of student error to proactive considerations of helping students develop the specific linguistic repertoire(s) they will need to achieve their communicative purposes as writers. The chapter goes well beyond error to discuss how instructors can help student writers gain awareness and control of formal features (grammar, vocabulary, punctuation) that influence the accuracy, clarity, style, and effectiveness of written texts in various genres.

As one might imagine, adding three new chapters to an already full-sized volume necessitated some decision making about the existing material. We condensed the previous two chapters on course and lesson design into one (again following the model of our 2009 reading book). We also merged two previously separate chapters on teacher and peer feedback into a single integrated discussion of response to student writing. We decided to eliminate the stand-alone chapter on technology for writing; in both previous editions the chapter was already out-of-date before it was published. Further, technology is now integral to writing instruction in nearly all contexts; dedicating a separate chapter to the uses of digital technology (as if it were something new or optional) somehow felt quaint. Instead, we have woven discussions of technological affordances for writing pedagogy throughout the chapters at appropriate points.

Further structural changes in the third edition involved reconfiguring the volume’s medial chapters, in an effort to have the text move more methodically through instructional principles and practices. For instance, Chapter 4 first explores the dynamic reciprocity between reading and writing processes; it then presents options for integrating reading mindfully into composition courses. The chapter likewise acquaints readers with a socioliterate approach that features the analysis and production of authentic genres in writing instruction; it concludes with practical recommendations for avoiding formulaic writing and constructing purposeful writing prompts and assignments. Chapter 5 surveys principles of course design and instructional planning, again following the model of our reading book. Course design and assessment are so inextricable that it is nearly impossible to discuss one topic without the other. Consequently, our introduction to L2 writing assessment (Chapter 6) now immediately follows Chapter 5. With the reorganized chapter structure, the current volume now consists of: three “foundations” chapters (1–3) that look at L2 writing, L2 writers, and pedagogical models; three broad chapters (4–6) that examine reading-writing connections,

instructional design, and assessment; and three specific chapters (7–9) that focus on response, error treatment, and language development.

Although the overall flow of the book is different, readers of the previous editions will recognize the familiar chapter structure. All chapters still include Questions for Reflection (at the beginning), Reflection and Review activities (at the end), Application Activities (following the text), and various figures and appendices that provide examples and illustrations of chapter material. As in our reading book, *Teaching Readers of English: Students, Texts, and Contexts* (Hedgcock & Ferris, 2009), we have also added “Further Reading and Resources” lists at the end of each chapter (before the Reflection and Review sections) that highlight the key resources mentioned in that particular chapter as well as other materials readers may find helpful. Complete bibliographic information for those sources, and all others cited within the text, is provided in a comprehensive reference list at the end of the book.

When we began work on the first edition of this book, we were only a few years beyond graduate school and were working as new teacher educators at our respective institutions. We have learned a great deal over the years because of the growth of the field, our own evolution as writing teachers, and—most importantly—our frequent opportunities to use the material in this book with our own classes of pre-service instructors in Master of Arts in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (MATESOL) programs. Although we have moved from being new professors to seasoned veterans, three things have remained constant: (1) We continue to be humbled by the efforts and successes of L2 student writers; (2) we believe strongly in the critical importance of effective literacy instruction for L2 students; and (3) we aim to offer accessible and useful resources to their instructors. We hope that this updated and redesigned version of *Teaching L2 Composition* will both please users of the previous editions and will win the book some new friends.

Dana’s Acknowledgments

Since the second edition of this book was published, I have moved to a new position, as professor in the University Writing Program at the University of California at Davis. This position affords me opportunities not only to work with L2 writing instructors but also with mainstream (pre-service and in-service) composition instructors and with faculty across the disciplines. The broader perspective of this new challenge has definitely influenced my thinking and even my terminology as I worked on this book. I am grateful to my colleagues and students in the UWP, and I especially want to mention the former director who hired me, Professor Chris Thaiss; the current director, Professor Carl Whithaus; Dr. Aliko Dragona, who has worked closely with me in directing the first-year writing program; and my writing group colleagues Professors Rebekka Andersen and Sarah Perrault, who have been generous with their personal support and excellent constructive feedback on various written projects.

The original table of contents for the first edition of this book was derived directly from my syllabus for English 215B: Teaching ESL Writing, a course that I created in 1993 and taught many times over the years in my previous position at California

State University, Sacramento. I continue to acknowledge my gratitude for the opportunities that I had there and to my colleagues and students in the TESOL Program and the English Department. Although I have moved elsewhere, I will always be thankful for the years that I spent there and how they influenced my development as an L2 writing professional and the development of this book, in particular.

Finally, I thank my doctoral adviser and mentor, Professor Robert B. Kaplan (Emeritus, University of Southern California), and my husband, Randy Ferris, for their support over these many years. Last but not least, I want to thank my wonderful coauthor, John Hedgcock, for being a joy and an inspiration to work with on our various ventures. When I grow up, I want to be just like him!

John's Acknowledgments

Like Dana, I found early inspiration for the first edition of this book as I developed materials for my graduate courses. I have been privileged to work with generous and supportive faculty colleagues, as well as outstanding MA students, at the Monterey Institute of International Studies (MIIS). I am especially indebted to my Fall 2012 cohort of EDUC 8560 students, many of whom eagerly read chapter drafts, diligently completed assignments, and offered thoughtful (and incisive) feedback on them as we worked our way through our course on teaching L2 writing. I am also delighted to thank Ann Flower, Pamela Jungerberg, and Monica Wilmot, supremely knowledgeable staff members at the William Tell Coleman Library, who made locating sources for this book easy, efficient, and always pleasant. My progress as a writer was painfully slow, and I offer my profound thanks to Dana, who exercised far more understanding, patience, and encouragement than I deserved as this book took shape. She sets unparalleled standards for her expert knowledge, productivity, and collegiality. Equally deserving of appreciation for his patience and endurance is my partner, Simon Hsu, who had to put up with me every day as I struggled to make progress. Along with our four-legged brood (Amica, Bella, and Lily), he lifted my spirits and kept me on target.

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We continue to be profoundly grateful for the friendship and support of our amazing editor, Naomi Silverman, who gave two young, unknown academics a chance back in 1995 and has been by our side ever since. Her encouragement, advice, and unsurpassed patience have kept us going even when the demands of real life sometimes made it difficult to keep the project on track. We also thank other members of the editorial staff at Routledge/Taylor & Francis who have worked on this edition. Finally, we are grateful to the users of the second edition who provided outstanding feedback before we began on the third edition.

*Dana Ferris
John Hedgcock*

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