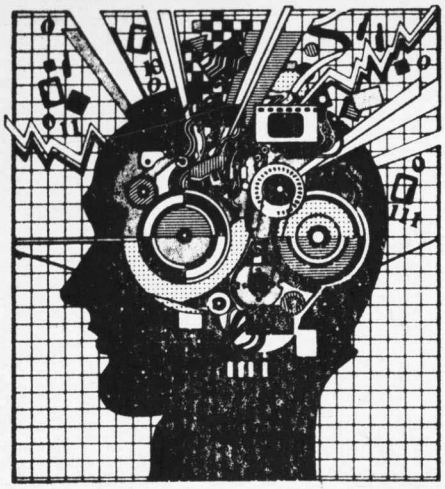
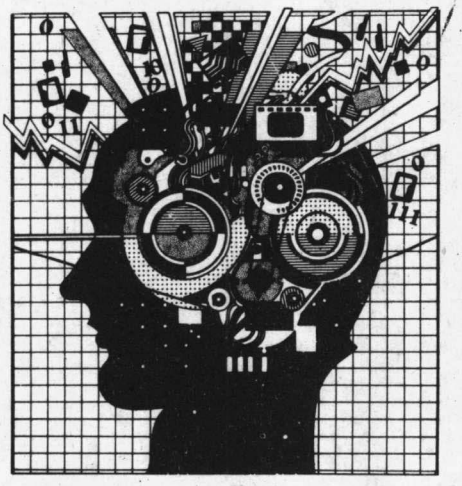


IDEA EXCHANGE 2

Writing What You Mean

Linda Lonon Blanton
University of New Orleans



IDEA EXCHANGE 2

Writing What You Mean

Linda Lonon Blanton
University of New Orleans

Newbury House Publishers
A division of Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc.
Cambridge, New York, Philadelphia, San Francisco, Washington, D.C.
London, Mexico City, São Paulo, Singapore, Sidney

Sponsoring Editor: Laurie Likoff
Production Coordinator: Cynthia Funkhouser
Text Design and Cover Design: Suzanne Bennett Associates
Text Art: Ray Skibinski
Compositor: Waldman Graphics
Printer and Binder: Malloy Lithographing Inc.

Newbury House Publishers, A Division of Harper & Row, Publishers, Inc.
Language Science
Language Teaching
Language Learning

Idea Exchange 2: Writing What You Mean

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

Blanton, Linda Lonon, 1942–
Idea exchange.

1. English language—Rhetoric. 2. English language—Textbooks for foreign speakers. I. Title.
PE1408.B526 1988 808'.042 87-35014
ISBN 0-06-632615-X (v. 2)

Printed in the U.S.A. First printing: April 1988
63-26151

91 90 89 88 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

PREFACE

IDEA EXCHANGE: Writing What You Mean, Book 2 is a writing text designed for adult students of English as a Second Language who have an intermediate level of proficiency. *Book 1*, of the same title, is designed to engage students, perhaps for the first time, in the process of writing with continual feedback from writing partners, readers, and a teacher/coach. *Book 2* follows, expands, and reinforces the lessons in *Book 1*. Both books reflect recent developments in second language composition theory. In format, both books additionally reflect my own classroom experimentation in balancing language acquisition and learning with students' need for fluency and accuracy, space for writing development, and psychological and linguistic support.

The lessons in *Book 2* are not self-instructional; they assume the guidance of a professional teacher. The Introduction to the Teacher gives suggestions on how the materials may best be used. I urge anyone using the materials to read that section.

Book 2 is divided into ten units. Each unit contains prewriting and prereading instructions, illustrated reading passages with accompanying exercises, a parallel writing section that follows a step-by-step process designed to aid writing development, and a postwriting activity. In each unit, the student's attention is directed to the exploration and communication of ideas in writing, although each unit has also been designed to gradually guide ESL writers into increasingly complex stages of writing development.

The purpose of having ESL students write is not to produce a finished piece of grammatically correct prose. Rather, it is writing to learn to write better. They need to develop as writers of English and each act of writing should further that development. The writing process is a continuum, and *Book 2* has been written to help students along one segment of that continuum.

I dedicate this book to my ESL students, past and present, who have taught me all that I know about teaching.

I would like to acknowledge Ann Raimes for her term "parallel writing" and Flower and Hayes for articulating some of the specific concerns that writers need to have about their readers. Years ago, I heard Amy Sonka talk about "interactive reading," a concept that sparked me to explore other ways of enlivening the classroom to promote language development. For

giving me that spark, I am grateful to her. I am undoubtedly indebted to many others whose ideas and terminology I've incorporated so thoroughly into my thinking that I am unaware of my debt.

I want to thank my student writers, Cherry Cappel, Lien Lo, Sebastian Pastor, and Hassen Souissi, for adding to the heart and soul of this book.

Linda Lonon Blanton
New Orleans

TO THE TEACHER

INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOK

The lessons in this book are written to the student. The student is addressed directly, and the instructions are written as clearly as possible so that, in most cases, they do not have to be "translated" by the teacher. The purpose of this is not to leave you out, for you are indispensable, but rather to engage students by involving them personally with the materials, thereby making your job a little easier.

You are invited to supplement and rearrange where you see fit. In particular, there may be rhetorical and grammatical aspects of each lesson that you will want to deal with more overtly than they are dealt with in the book. However you use the materials, you are urged to create a classroom atmosphere that will make students feel safe to explore new linguistic ground without fear of failure, and where students' writing is respected no matter how far from perfect it is.

What follows is a discussion of the methodology inherent in the materials, as well as a suggested plan for using them. These may help you in understanding why and how to use the lessons.

METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

The materials in *Idea Exchange: Writing What You Mean, Book 2* are based on the supposition that writing competency develops along a continuum of ever-increasing accuracy and fluency, and that it develops over time and within an atmosphere of encouragement and respect. Further, it develops most rapidly when the focus is on communicating and sharing ideas and experiences, not on counting errors and getting grades—although, to be sure, students want feedback on their errors and rewards for work well done. Finally, writing

competency develops when reading is intertwined with writing: readings then serve as a source of ideas, stimulation, vocabulary, ways of thinking, and language use that enables the reader to become a writer and, in turn, to be read.

Book 2 is designed for students of English as a Second Language who have an intermediate level of proficiency. However, you should use the book without too much regard for the "intermediate" label if it fits the needs of you and your students; programs vary enormously, and your students may find such labels to be meaningless. The materials have also been used effectively with "false beginners"—those who may sound quite fluent but who don't have reading and writing skills to match their oral fluency.

The book is written for adults who want to learn English for professional, academic, and business purposes. The format has been tested successfully with students ranging in age from seventeen to forty-five, from eight different language backgrounds, and with varying degrees of education.

ORGANIZATION OF THE TEXT

The book is divided into ten units, each unit containing prewriting and prereading activities, two illustrated readings with accompanying exercises on various grammatical and rhetorical aspects of the readings, instructions for the students' own writing, and a postwriting activity. In all, the ten lessons provide forty to fifty class hours of instruction and writing practice.

One of the prewriting activities involves journal writing, which is not designed to be read by the teacher or anyone else; its purpose is to give students some writing privacy, a few moments to reflect and explore without concern for how their writing appears. Any notebook can become a "journal" when entries are made in it routinely. The other prewriting activity directs students to play with words by writing particular kinds of sentences, such as "sad" sentences or "fat" sentences; this activity shows students how creative they can be with their new language and that they can actually have some silly fun with it.

THE READINGS

The readings are actually essays written by real students—three nonnative English speakers and one native speaker—and edited to fit the purposes of this book. Despite the editing, the student writers' own voices and personalities still dominate their essays. The purpose in

using student essays is to provide authenticity in the writing, to give your students real people to identify with, and to engage them in using English to find out more and more about four individuals whom they will find interesting and worth caring about.

The illustrations that accompany the readings will help make meanings clear and can be used to guide oral discussion or the retelling of each text. There are no notes or questions on the paragraph structure or organizational framework of each reading. Experience has shown that such features are "absorbed" by most students as they read, and that it is more effective to work with them on a student-by-student basis when problems in paragraphing and organizing appear in their writing.

One last point about the readings: they are truly intended to be readings, not models in any strict sense of the word. The readings are intentionally above the level of your students' own written output, although they are not above their reading level—if they stretch. The readings are there to exercise your students' reading muscles, to serve as written input to the language acquisition process, and to challenge and stimulate students to share parallel ideas and experiences of their own. In effect, the readings provide a context for your students' writing. Don't expect their writing to be an imitation of the essays in the book; rather, it will be additional writing, at a less sophisticated level, within the same thematic areas.

EXERCISES

The exercises that follow the readings in each unit are varied in order to maintain student interest, as well as to cover linguistic ground over the scope of the book. Many of the grammar exercises are designed to review features that students may need to check on consciously as they edit their writing. The exercises can be deleted or supplemented, depending on what your students need to work on.

WRITING

The procedure that students are directed to follow in writing their own essays is just as important as the essays they write. Built into the procedure are strategies that will help the writer focus on the needs of the reader, help generate content for the writing, provide feedback in the early stages of writing and move the writer toward self-correction, and promote revision and editing.

You are urged to give as much attention to the writing process as to the written product. They are equally important. Students will

surely want you to read their writing and assess it, and you may have already found a satisfactory way of responding to student writing. My own choice is to respond to the content and to select one rhetorical or grammatical problem to "highlight" and note on each essay.

THE LEARNING LOG

The postwriting activity takes the form of an "entry" into a learning log, actually a sheet of notebook paper on which the students write their thoughts about their own learning and which they turn in at the end of each unit. My own way of responding to each student's log is to write several comments in return on their papers—commiserating with a problem, sharing the joy of an important discovery, answering a question, or sharing a similar insight or experience. In addition, I handwrite a collective log to the class (on a ditto so that I can make copies for everyone) in which I comment on recent work in the class, cite the ideas or comments of a classmate, and summarize some of the content of their individual logs. I've found that students dearly love to see themselves cited or quoted in my log!

The purpose of a learning log is threefold: to give students a reason to reflect on the learning process, to set up another writing situation with a real reader (you and then your students), and to help provide a sense of collaboration between you and your students. Writing a learning log can be as valuable as writing a journal or a "regular" essay. In different ways, each enhances a writing program and promotes writing development.

TOPICS, RHETORIC, ORGANIZATION, AND GRAMMAR

In content, the units focus on aspects of daily life that touch all of us—people we know and love, changes in our lives, memorable experiences, daily routines, our education. These topics are so universal that they can be personalized by your students, a factor that will make writing easier and more meaningful. None of us can write well on topics that are remote to our own knowledge and experience.

Rhetorically, the readings and students' parallel writing are primarily narrative (Units 1, 2, 5, 7) and descriptive (Units 3, 4, 9). The mode of discourse used to develop the content in Units 8 and 10 is expository, where writers analyze aspects of their past experience. Writers persuade in Unit 6 as they use language to push the reader into action.

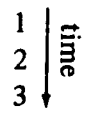
In these materials, it is always the content and the writers' intentions that lead the way, not a rhetorical mode. Such is the natural flow of written English. You may want to point out rhetorical aspects of the readings, and you should do so if your students are curious or have difficulty with the way a writer has handled a topic; however, also point out to them that writing takes on a particular "shape" because of what the writer wants to say and do, and that characteristic rhetorical "shapes" in English are not molds for writers to put their content into. They are a by-product of the writer's efforts, shaped by the writer's way of thinking about a topic.

Organizationally, the readings that serve as the core of each unit illustrate the following:

- ☐ Chronological order (a time arrangement): Units 1, 4, 5, 7
- ☐ Classification (a division into components): Unit 8
- ☐ Logical division (a kind of classification with an analytic division into subthemes): Units 3, 10
- ☐ Ranking (a kind of classification along a hierarchy): Unit 6
- ☐ Shift of subject (a kind of conversational stream of consciousness): Unit 2
- ☐ Comparison and contrast (a balancing of similarities and/or differences): Unit 9

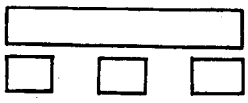
Students with strong rhetorical backgrounds may be interested in some discourse analysis; if so, they may want to know terminology and understand rhetorical concepts. Diagrams may be a good visual way of explaining organizational arrangements:

Chronological order:



Example: morning, afternoon, evening

Classification/Logical division

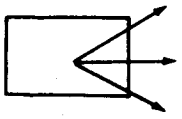


Example: education classified into elementary, secondary, and college

Ranking:

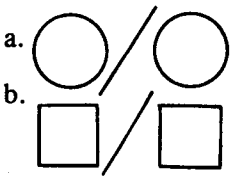
Example: in applying for a job, degree = most important; experience = second most important

Shift of subject



Example: me, you, your family

Comparison/ Contrast:



Example: age = older/younger

Whenever direct attention is given to rhetorical analysis, it should be emphasized that writers do not set out, for example, to classify; classification as an organizational framework will be evident in the writing of a writer who wants to clarify the "pieces" of a larger concept or construct. Again, a particular organizational framework is a by-product of what a writer sets out to do. It is up to you to judge whether attending to such matters confuses or distracts the students or whether it helps to satisfy the intellectual curiosity of rhetorically minded adults. A lot of rhetorical know-how is acquired by students, in my experience, without their conscious knowlege of it. They simply put it into practice.

Structurally, the content of the readings is developed within the time frames of present and past. As a result, the writers of the readings have used primarily the simple present, present continuous, and simple past tenses. The past continuous is used occasionally, and the present perfect tense (both simple and continuous) appears more frequently toward the end of the book.

The progression of tenses through the ten units is largely the result of the arrangement of topic areas, rather than a rigorous editing of the readings. For example, the topic that requires the greatest use of the present perfect for its expression is placed at the end, since the concept behind the present perfect is sometimes baffling to the many students whose native languages conceptualize what we see as past-to-present time, unspecified past time, and immediate past time in other ways. It makes sense, then, to help students gain confidence and greater control of the language in grammatical areas that seem less complex before tackling areas that may give them trouble. This is not to say that students should be exposed only to language forms that we think they are ready for; in fact, it is productive for them to work with content that they can largely understand, yet which contains structural forms that they may not as yet be able to produce, or produce accurately. This will enhance their readiness for certain units of language, and, in fact, students may

end up acquiring those units without any direct work on their part or yours. This is language development at its very best.

Overall, you will notice a gradual grading of structural complexity over the span of the book according to what classroom experience seems to indicate is a progression of complexity. Note that this is done gradually and gently without damaging the authenticity of the readings, with forms appearing in the readings before they become the grammatical focus of a particular unit. The result may be that students try to use a form or ask about an item of grammar before it becomes an overt part of a general lesson; so much the better. There is never a wrong time for students to be ready for a new piece of language.

A SUGGESTED TIME FRAME FOR THE LESSONS

Each unit is designed to provide material for five hours of class work. If students meet for composition five days a week, as they do in some intensive ESL programs, much of the basic work can be done in class. If they meet fewer days per week, more of the work will need to be assigned as homework in order to complete a unit per week; if the amount of homework seems excessive, then each unit might be stretched over a week and a half for a less rigorous pace.

What follows is a five-day suggested plan for each unit:

Day 1: Prewriting and prereading. Students write in their journals and play with words in class. Then they prepare for the reading, combining individual work on paper with oral sharing. If time permits, you may want to present the readings by "telling" them or reading them aloud while students listen and follow the illustrations. Assignment: students read and study the readings, looking up problem vocabulary in their dictionaries and becoming familiar enough with the content to be able to "tell" it in class the next day.

Day 2: Readings and exercises. Several students take turns retelling the readings from memory, while others listen and follow the illustrations. Students then offer corrections or supplementary information after the retelling. Alternative ideas are for the teacher to ask oral questions whose answers, in effect, constitute a retelling, or to write sequential questions on the board and have students take turns collectively retelling by answering the written questions. Next, students refer to their own questions from the section preceding the readings, the questions that an-

ticipate what they expect to find in the readings, and comment on the discrepancies and similarities between what they expected and what they actually found. If possible, do the exercises that follow the readings, individually or collectively. Even if it means cutting out some of the steps outlined above, work with students to set their reader goals for their own writing (the first step of "Parallel Writing"). Assignment: students write a first draft of their own essays (the second step of "Parallel Writing").

Day 3: Collaborative work and revising. Students work on their drafts with their partners in class (step 3). Any exercises that weren't previously completed and/or checked can be attended to. Assignment: second draft (step 4).

Day 4: More collaborative work and editing. Any general problems that are surfacing as students work on their papers can be addressed at the beginning of the class. Students work with partners again (step 5), exchanging their drafts, and responding in writing. Assignment: students write a final version of their compositions with consideration of their readers' responses (step 6). Everyone writes a learning log entry.

Day 5: Reader response and wrap up. Writers get together with their readers and explain or elaborate on the final form of their compositions. Any collective problems concerning language or procedure that are surfacing can be addressed. Learning log entries are turned in, and here is where you may want to collect students' essays. (You may also want to stagger it so that you don't see every student's paper every week. You also might want to have students select which one of every three or four papers they want you to read and respond to.)

If this schedule seems too tight, the work of each unit can be stretched over a six-day schedule or otherwise adjusted to make it more workable for your particular program.

CONCLUSION AND EXPECTATIONS

At the end of the term, you may want to prepare a table of contents for a special composition notebook that each student provides and keeps, containing all of the student's numbered and dated compositions for the course, along with reader responses and learning logs. The notebook can serve as a handy reference and a valuable resource for future composition work. If resources permit, you might ask each

student to select a favorite piece of writing for "publication" and then have copies made for everyone in the class. That way everyone would finish the course with a "class book" (actually a manila folder or a binder of some sort) containing a piece of writing by every member of the class.

After working through all of the lessons in the book, students can be expected to write a two-page essay on a familiar, everyday topic. You can expect the essay to be coherently developed and reasonably accurate. In order to see for yourself the changes in students' level of writing development over the weeks of the term, you may want to ask students to write a spontaneous essay in class, perhaps autobiographical in nature, at the beginning of the term and then ask them to repeat the assignment (without there having been any discussion or response to the earlier assignment—just tell them that you are saving their essays for later) at the end of the term. I think that you will be amazed at the tangible differences, differences that you may not have been aware of on a day-to-day basis.

Best of luck as you begin the term!

TO THE STUDENT

Welcome to *IDEA EXCHANGE: Writing What You Mean, Book 2!* In this book, you will practice your reading and writing skills. The readings are by real students like you. The only difference is that they have already finished their English courses. Three of them are non-native speakers of English, like you; the fourth one is a native speaker of English. You will learn a lot about them as you read their essays. I think that you will like them more and more as you learn about them.

You will do different kinds of writing in this book. You will do journal writing. This is where you write about yourself and about your ideas and memories; it is only for you to read. Journal writing will give you a chance to explore freely.

You will also write words, sentences, and questions in response to instructions; sometimes this writing will be in the form of an exercise. This kind of writing may not seem like "real" writing, but it gives you a chance to use your new language, English. You will also write essays; this kind of writing may seem like "real" writing to you.

Finally, you will write a learning log. You may not know what a learning log is; it is like a journal, but in a learning log you write about studying and learning. All of these different kinds of writing are part of the process of becoming a better writer. You want to become a better writer of English, don't you? I thought so!

You may think that writing is a lonely activity. You are right in some ways. When you write, there is often only you . . . and the pen and paper. However, more people really should be part of the writing process, and in this book, they are.

In addition to the writer (you!), there is always a reader. The reader is the person that you write *to* and *for*. When you write in your journal, you will be both the writer and the reader. When you

are getting ready to write an essay, you will need to choose a reader. That reader will probably be one of your classmates. When you write in your learning log, your teacher will be your reader. As you work through the lessons in this book, you will learn to think more about your reader.

In addition to the reader, you will have a partner or helper. A partner is someone who can help you work out your ideas and help you find the right words. A writing partner is really a friend and editor. Every writer needs one.

Finally, there is the teacher. Writers also need teachers. Teachers can become readers and partners, but most of all they are coaches. Your teacher-coach can encourage you, answer your questions, and guide you. So you see that writing is not such a lonely activity after all!

Writers need tools and materials, just like carpenters. You will need the following:

1. a notebook that will become your journal
2. 8½ × 11-inch loose-leaf notebook paper for your essay writing and for your learning log
3. pens and pencils
4. a good translation dictionary and an English–English dictionary

Reading and writing are inseparable. After all, if there is no writing, there is no reading; if there is no reader, then there is no reason to write. If you write something, you are a writer; if you read what someone writes, you are a reader. Reading and writing are two sides of the same coin. Reading English is a good way for you to pick up more and more of the language. You may not know what or how much you are picking up, but that doesn't matter.

It is impossible to reduce reading to a few rules, but these rules for good reading can help you:

1. Read the complete piece before you use your dictionary.
2. Do not stop after every word; read groups of words.
3. Do not move your mouth when you read; read with your eyes.
4. After you finish reading, use your dictionary to look up new words.
5. Read each piece more than once; look for smaller units of meaning (examples, details to explain a general idea, etc.). Also look for important connections between the ideas and units of meaning (words such as *and, because, therefore, however, finally, before,* etc.).

Your attitude about writing is very important. It will affect how well you write. Here are a few points to keep in mind:

1. Nobody's writing is perfect. Believe it!
2. The point of writing is not to get something right. It is to express your ideas, yourself, your knowledge. It is to communicate to your reader. It is to think more clearly and more deeply. It is to explore the language and your own thoughts.
3. A good writer is also a good reader. You cannot learn to write English unless you read and read and read English.
4. In order to write, you have to think. The act of writing is the act of putting your thinking on paper.
5. Thinking is hard work; so is writing.
6. In order to become a better writer, you have to like to write.
7. Learning to write better is not just a course in school; it is a lifelong activity.
8. Writing is a mode of learning. You need to write in order to learn anything—English, history, chemistry, economics, etc.
9. You need to be curious in order to learn.
   So how is your attitude?

It is certainly impossible to reduce good writing in English to a few rules, but here are some simple ones that will help you:

1. Leave margins: left, right, top, and bottom.
2. Indent each paragraph.
3. Put a period at the end of each sentence. Put a question mark at the end of each question. Put an exclamation mark if you want to show strong emotion.
   Examples: John is absent today.
   Is he sick?
   He had a terrible day!
4. Use capital letters correctly:
   a. names of people
      Example: John Andres
   b. names of cities
      Example: Paris
   c. names of countries
      Example: Japan
   d. names of rivers
      Example: the Amazon River
   e. names of streets
      Example: Michigan Avenue