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SERIES: 2

Learning to Write: Some Cognitive and Linguistic Components
Elsa Jaffe Bartlett

Introduction by Jana Staton

Roger W. Shuy, General Series Editor

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Acknowledgements

Introduction

Research on writing and writing development has mushroomed in recent years, but thus far it has told us far more about the expectations and constraints created by the schools than about the nature and development of writing (Britton et al., 1975; Shuy, 1981). We know what young writers do under typical composition-writing circumstances, but we do not know much about what they can do, nor about strategies and constraints inherent in the act of composing written text (Bereiter, 1979). These limitations result from concentrating analyses on the easily observable features of written texts—an approach in which writing is narrowly defined as a "product." Fortunately, a strong new line of research is developing that views writing as a process and studies the plans, decisions, strategies, and constraints involved.

In this book, Elsa Bartlett has organized and synthesized data on the composing process to clearly show the instructional implications. The paper is designed especially for use by researchers, evaluators, and teachers who want to understand the direct, practical implications of this research for writing instruction and assessment, particularly for "young" writers (elementary and junior high or middle school). Bartlett sees writing as an act of communication, in contrast to a perspective implicitly held by many educators and students for whom writing is the observable product. She presents a picture of writing from the producer's point of view, as "a highly complex and difficulty activity, requiring integration of many different cognitive and linguistic processes."

Research on the composing process tries to understand what Bartlett calls the "heart of writing"—the assembling of potential information by the writer into a plan for written discourse and the transformation of that content into coherent text. The research of Bartlett, Flower and Hayes, and Scardamalia and Bereiter reviewed here focuses on how this process occurs and on the difficulties involved. The cognitive focus thus is not concerned with surface features of writing (spelling, handwriting) nor with the larger instructional context that constrains or facilitates writing in the classroom. Keeping in mind this deliberate focus, we can learn much about the nature of the composing process: how are overall plans for writing a text developed, and what are the difficulties young writers face in making a plan? What skills are needed in transforming these plans into coherent text? What problems do young writers face because of the differences between spoken language production, at which they are eminently competent by age five, and written language production?

An understanding of the way written texts are composed also can help teachers, students, and researchers to spot some of the common myths about writing. For example, the composing process research demonstrates convincingly that writing doesn't happen "all at once," and that writing is not a "picture" of the writer's mind but is instead a complex creation reflecting the struggle to translate plans into text. Composing a story,

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descriptive essay, or set of directions requires that the writer have a "plan" based on some conception of what the particular text structure is about. Although we often teach and test young writers as if such knowledge were innate, research shows that students are not born with such concepts and that the acquisition of knowledge of the features of a story or expository essay continues through late adolescence.

Another myth is that revising a paragraph written by another is a good test of one's ability to revise one's own work. Bartlett demonstrates the major differences in the two tasks. She challenges teachers to have students learn revision with self-generated writing and questions the validity of assessing editing skills by using nonself-generated text. Bartlett describes the difficulties of the composing process in order to argue that we should focus on helping students recognize and understand that these are real difficulties all writers face. She suggests that instruction be based on some of the real problems of writing a text: learning to create cohesive ties and unambiguous co-references and learning to reread what one has written from the audience's perspective.

This study presents an up-to-date understanding of the "heart" of writing--the actual real-time process of composing a text. If this, then, is the "heart" of the process, what of the rest of the writing process surrounding the act of composing -- the physical and social context involving an audience and the occurrences of events about which the writer has reason to write? We clearly need to know a great deal more about the actual context and process of writing, if we are to facilitate the composing process. Bartlett points out that "writers generally approach their task with some intention to produce a text of a certain...genre or type" and goes on to describe the process of doing so. But we also need to know what brings students to the point of having a genuine intention to write. What leads them to <u>select</u> a certain type of text for a particular audience and then to devise <u>a plan</u> for translating their ideas into written form?

Although these questions are not about the composing process itself, they are central to whether writing will occur in any meaningful way. We must not think that the solution to narrow attention on isolating and evaluating the surface product of writing will be to refocus on the separate components of the composing process. The view of the composing process as central to the writing process should not result in students practicing it apart from the intentions, audiences, and events about which there is something worth saying and apart from extended writing activities.

Recent national studies of writing in American schools have shown a disturbing picture (Graves, 1978; Applebee, 1980) of whether students are being given the opportunity to write. Students at both elementary and secondary levels are not often involved in writing coherent, complete discourse, nor are they involved in using writing much at all. The National Study of Secondary School Writing (Applebee, 1980) found that only three percent of the student's time is spent on "extended writing" activities -- the generation of written discourse in which the skills and knowledge of the composing process is needed. Graves found similar lack of involvement with extended writing at the elementary level. The research on the composing process can be of value only if the complete process is allowed to happen over and over again.

This research on the composing process, then, needs to be seen within a larger framework of the writing process as complex communicative interaction. As communicative interaction, writing also includes the writer's intentions and purposes, which lead to the decision to write; interactions with others in order to gather information; and the relationship to an audience, including the potential responses from the audience.

FRAMEWORK OF THE COMPOSING PROCESS

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                        ┌─────────────────────┐
                        │ Context of Writing  │
  ┌─────────────────────┤                     ├──────────────────────────────┐
  │                     └─────────────────────┘                              │
  │  Writer          Interactive        Successive ──▶ Written ──▶ Audience  │
  │  -Purpose ◀────▶ Preparation ◀────▶ Writing ──────▶ Text      -Purpose  │
  │  -Personal,      to Write           Attempts ───────▶  ┊         ┊  -Response │
  │    social                              ┊               ┊         ┊        ┊   │
  │    experiences                         ┊               ┊         ┊        ┊   │
  │  ┊                                     ┊             Product     ┊        ┊   │
  │  ┊                                     ┊                         ┊        ┊   │
  │  ┊                                     └─ Composing Process ─────┘        ┊   │
  │  ┊                                                                        ┊   │
  └──────────────── Writing Process as Communicative Event ──────────────────┘
```
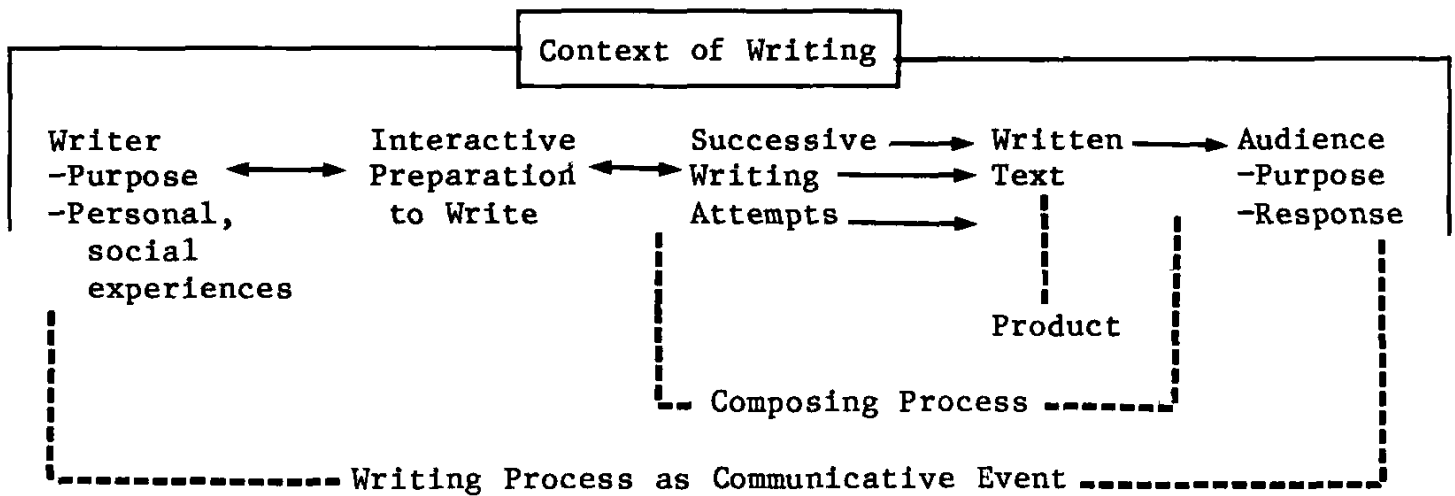
The educator is responsible for creating, maintaining, and assessing
this entire process, and there is research to suggest that the greatest
failure of writing instruction and assessment comes in not creating con-
ditions under which students would have reason to compose a text (Graves,
1978, 1979). The teacher who determines the topics, instead of allowing
them to be self-generated, who neither allows students to write to real
audiences nor plays the role of an audience by responding with real
questions and comments, eliminates most of the reasons for writing (Staton,
1981). Children are competent communicators who approach the writing task
with experience in being relevant, specific, and generally informative. In
trying to make writing "easy" by providing overly simple, standard topics
for writing, we are giving the students topics about which nothing new can
be said.

　The research on the social context of writing by Florio (Florio 1979;
Florio and Clark 1981), along with that already cited by Graves and Staton,
supports the conclusion that young writers' difficulties with composing are
the direct consequence of the kinds of formal text structure they are
asked to produce, often without any exposure to useful models, and the
degree and abruptness with which we remove the supports available to them
in oral discourse. These discourse supports include having a known
audience able to provide feedback, having self-generated topics, and having
the interactional support of the other speaker in accomplishing the purpose
of the communication (Cazden, 1979; Mehan, 1979). Shuy has pointed out
that to assess writing proficiency by asking young students to write under
the double constraints of no social contextual support and without knowing
the strategies necessary for producing written text, is similar to
"assessing ability to walk by having someone walk on slippery pavement with
a broken toe and high-heeled shoes" (1981). Consequently, we learn about
the effects of constraints and expectations rather than about the students'
ability to write.

　Bartlett's findings about the composing process contribute greatly to
the effort to develop an instructional context that encourages writing
about self-generated topics—writing that is purposive or functional from
the student's perspective. This combination of a focused look at the com-
posing process and an understanding of context provides the basis for a
rich mixture of educational practices to support and facilitate the com-
posing process and to allow it to happen in meaningful ways.

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Contents

Chapter 1

The Second "R"

Declining Competency

Children's ability to produce written discourse seems to be declining. The evidence comes from a number of sources. The National Assessment of Educational Progress, which conducts regular surveys of students' academic knowledge, reports a marked decline in children's writing skills in the four years between the 1969 and 1974 assessments (NAEP, 1975). Most recently, the New York State Board of Regents announced that four out of five eighth, ninth, and tenth graders (including those bound for college) failed or barely passed a new writing competency test which required only that they write a simple business letter and a 150-word composition (New York Times, September 10, 1977). More generally, even our most prestigious colleges are finding it necessary to set up writing clinics and other remedial programs, not just for "special" or low income students, but for students across the board. For example, Wheeler (1979) reports that nearly half the entering freshmen at the University of California, Berkeley, are required to take remedial writing courses while at the University of Michigan and the University of Georgia, remedial writing replaces the one term of freshman English common ten years ago.

Educators suggest a number of reasons for the decline. Increased television viewing is almost always mentioned, but there are other villains as well. Wheeler, for example, lays much of the blame on the testing industry, citing its extensive use of multiple choice items and its failure to require writing on major achievement, aptitude, and licensing examinations. There is no question that it is quicker and cheaper to score multiple choice items than individual essays, but the problem runs deeper than an industry's need to produce a reliable but cost-effective score.

These tests serve an important gatekeeping function in our society, determining who will go to college and professional school and who, after schooling, will be licensed to practice. Were these tests to require no reading or mathematics, we would surely dismiss them as inappropriate or trivial. That we continue to take them seriously, despite the fact that they require virtually no writing, is an important indication of our present ambivalence toward writing skill. On the one hand, we complain of poor writing in our workforce, but we are not sufficiently interested in insuring that these skills exist to insist that their assessment be part of our gatekeeping procedures.

Given our present ambivalence, it is not surprising to find a decline in our schools' commitment to writing. For instance, Graves (1981) notes that only ten to fifteen percent of the material in children's language arts texts and workbooks involves writing, a particularly striking figure when we realize that more than ninety percent of classroom instruction is

governed by these materials. Graves also cites data from a recent large survey of seventeen year olds who were asked to indicate how much writing they had done in all their courses during the previous six weeks. The results indicate that fifty percent had written only two or three pages (or about half a page per week), twelve percent had written only one short page, and thirteen percent had done no writing at all.

Graves cites other figures that reinforce this impression of a lack of commitment to writing. He notes that for every dollar spent on the teaching of writing, a hundred or more are spent on reading. Further: "Of exemplary programs in language chosen for recognition by the U. S. Office of Education in 1976, forty-six were in reading, only seven included any writing objectives at all and only one was designed for the specific development of writing abilities." (p. 12) Finally, he cites data from a survey of school superintendents who were asked to describe the minimum criteria used in interviewing candidates for an elementary teaching position. Seventy-eight percent thought that teachers should have a minimum of three courses in teaching of reading, but comparable criteria relating to writing were not necessary. In sum, today's children are likely to have had relatively little practice with many forms of written discourse. At the same time, given the current disregard of writing as a prerequisite for college and professional schools, individuals are likely to have little motivation for developing writing skills while elementary and high schools are likely to feel little commitment to foster them.

Given these conditions, it is no wonder that writing skill has been declining. Fortunately, however, the last two or three years have brought a growing awareness of the problem along with a resolve among many educators, parents, and business leaders to do something about it. Declines in writing scores are beginning to make headlines. Articles and books about a "writing crisis" are beginning to appear (see, for example, New York Times, September 18, 1979). School superintendents are beginning to call for "crash programs." Funding for research is becoming available. Writing is assuming more importance as a topic at educational conferences.

Although the problem of declining writing is a complicated one, the success of any attempt to halt this decline ultimately will depend on our instructional efforts. These need not take place in school settings; one can envision, for example, writing instruction as part of on-the-job training or other adult education efforts. In the end, however, it is the effectiveness of our instruction, no matter where it is delivered, that will make the difference.

One of the principal obstacles to the development of more effective instructional programs is ambiguity about the processes which enter into writing. Cognitive and linguistic explanations for writers' problems are generally adduced on an ad hoc basis, and remedies are all too often suggested without any serious attempt to formulate a coherent picture of what it is that writers must actually learn to do. For example, a recent writing assessment noted that many children had difficulty establishing a coherent voice in their narrative writings. Although the problem could be related to a number of underlying cognitive or linguistic difficulties (difficulties in establishing referential cohesion, for example), the researchers somewhat arbitrarily asserted that the principal problem concerned children's inability to imagine events from another's point of view and advised teachers to engage children in a series of role-play exercises. It is plausible that role-play will help children develop more flexible imaginations and it is even possible that increased flexibility may make some contribution to children's ability to establish a consistent narrative voice, but the link between role play and text construction is hardly simple or straightforward.

Construction of written text is a highly complex and difficult activity, requiring skilled integration of many different linguistic and cognitive processes. Problems may develop at any stage and, indeed, it is possible that similar-seeming errors are the result of very different underlying difficulties. For teachers and researchers concerned with diagnosis and remediation (as well as the evaluation of a burgeoning number of claims about writing instruction) it is crucial to begin to differentiate some of these processes in order to begin to assess their potential contributions to growth in writing.

A Definition

Writing is a complicated business, involving writers, readers, and some shared knowledge of language. It can be defined in any number of ways. Some view it chiefly in terms of its affect on the writer: an excellent way for students to achieve an identity or master new information or explore the intricacies of language. For example: "Writing...is inherently a learning activity in which experience is translated in special ways into terms the writer can understand and store for use. People...can evaluate a child's writing in terms of the degree to which his attempt to write is enabled him to shape, control and thus understand something previously beyond his grasp." (Brown, p.5)

Although the act of writing may have these and other benefits for a writer, for our present purposes we will consider writing primarily as an act of communication. People do, of course, engage in writing without any particular intent to communicate with others: they make lists and reminders, they keep diaries, and so forth. But for our present discussion, we will be concerned almost entirely with writings that are ultimately intended to be read by others. To communicate effectively, a writer must choose language that enables a reader to achieve an intended interpretation. In a sense, we can say that the language provides a reader with a set of instructions for constructing his or her interpretation and these will be good or bad, depending on whether they enable a reader to integrate information from the text efficiently, unambiguously, and appropriately.

Some Components of Writing Skill

Writing begins with an intent to accomplish something and these intentions are of two sorts. On the one hand, we write in order to have some intended effect on our readers. At the same time, we write in order to produce a certain type of artifact. These can be amazingly intricate in structure (e.g., novels or haiku) or fairly simple (e.g., personal letters or memos). In any case, a writer must manage to keep both intentions in mind while grappling with the problem of turning these intentions into words. The actual selection of syntax and wording will be constrained by a number of different considerations. Ideas for content must be shaped to a syntactic structure, with elements formulated into subjects and predicates. At the same time, wordings must be chosen that will enable readers to link the incoming information to what they already know about the text.

Generally, we can say that writers must manage to juggle two sorts of tasks: on the one hand, they must maintain some consistent overall plan for a discourse, which guides the selection and arrangement of potential content. On the other hand, they must simultaneously cope with the on-going problem of turning that potential content into coherent, unambiguous text. It is clear that to accomplish this, writers must draw on an enormous range of skills and knowledge. For example, consider this science report by a six year old. The topic is volcanoes and the text is concerned with the youngster's knowledge both of volcanoes and of how to make volcano models:

(page 1) Wute* is a volkcano?
          a mawtin that exploz fire.

(page 2) Wute is a sleeping volkcano?
          a volkcano that exploz and duzint.

(page 3) Wute is a ded volkcano?
          a volcano that nevr exploz.

(page 4) Wher is a irel** volkano?
          in hwie!

(page 5) How to make a volkcano?
          1 shap it out uf clay.

(page 6) 2 Put the lite in.
          3 I panted it.
          4 I shlaced it.***

Two things are immediately evident: the younger writer is utilizing his knowledge of volcanoes and volcano model-building, and he is also utilizing a recognizable question-and-answer discourse plan that involves an impersonal third-person account of volcanoes and a non-anecdotal impersonal account of how to make volcano models. At some point in the composing process he must have summoned up what was then only a potential content, based no doubt on what he had gleaned about volcanoes from books, conversations with his teachers, a museum trip, and perhaps some television viewing. Additionally, he must have recalled his own experiences constructing a volcano model in class. At the same time, he must have developed a plan for writing this down. Although the source of his plan may be a little difficult to specify, it is likely that the idea came in part from his understanding of the particular assignment (to write a science report) and his knowledge of how similar assignments had been carried out in this particular classroom before.

In any case, it is clear that a major part of the writer's task was to select from his knowledge of volcanoes information that could serve as potential content for the text and to transform that content into language which was consistent with his overall plan for the discourse. As we can see, he initially shows considerable skill in accomplishing this, but toward the end, he seems to lose track of the plan and drifts into an anecdotal first person account of his personal experience constructing volcano models. Why the discourse plan might have broken down at this particular point is a question that will be considered in detail in chapter 2. For now, I want to point out that one aspect of composing involves integrating topic with discourse plan and that at times this integration can be quite difficult for writers to achieve.

Integration of topic with discourse plan is only one of the problems facing a young writer. Consider, for example, the following by an eight year old. It was produced in response to a classroom assignment that asked the children to compose texts which followed the basic plan of a familiar and well-loved story, Remy Charlip's Fortunately (1964):

          •
              (title) A Trip to the Beach
                       A Fortunately Book

---

* I have retained the original spelling and punctuation in all children's texts.
** airel volkano? = a real volcano?
*** I shlaced it = I shellacked it.

(page 1)   Fortunately he got a letter to go to the beach.
(page 2)   Unfortunately he did not know where to go.
(page 3)   Fortunately they came to pick him up.
(page 4)   Unfortunately we got lost.
(page 5)   Fortunately we found the beach.
(page 6)   Unfortunately it was the wrong beach.
(page 7)   Fortunately they desired to stay.
(page 8)   Unfortunately they were kicked out.
(page 9)   Fortunately they went home.
(page 10) Unfortunately they were speeding.
(page 11) Fortunately he let us go.
(page 12) Unfortunately we got lost on the way home.
(page 13) Fortunately we got home.

Here the simple discourse plan is successfully maintained as the writer consistently alternates contrastive single-sentence event descriptions. But another problem is immediately apparent: how is a reader to interpret the various pronouns? The author has supplied pictures which make possible a few interpretations, but even with the pictures most of the hes, wes, and theys remain quite obscure.

These difficulties highlight another aspect of a writer's job: managing information so that a reader has sufficient context to interpret a particular piece of text. Sometimes, as in the preceeding example, the needed information for contextualizing is never provided. The reader is simply left with a sprinkling of unidentifiable pronouns.

In other cases, the problem seems to be more a matter of timing: a reader gets the information, but it comes well after it is needed. As an example, consider this text by another eight year old, composed in response to a researcher's request to write a story about a set of pictures:

Once upon a time three boys were going to ice skate One of them fell thru a hole in the ice The two boys helped the boy up. Then the boys went home. There name was Bob and Joe and Pete Pete fell thru The end.

Even without additional information, a reader can make some sense of the third sentence; however, prior introduction of names would have provided some definite referents for the nouns and enabled the writer to avoid the somewhat vague and awkward the boy. Apparently the writer felt this as well, for she eventually added this extra information. Unfortunately, the addition comes well after the reader has struggled to make sense of the awkward bit of text.

The point is that writers must integrate considerations of topic and discourse plan with necessary and appropriate interpretive contexts. Once again, it is important to stress that considerations governing the use of an overall discourse plan may be quite separate from those governing the construction of more local interpretative contexts, as the Fortunately book example demonstrates.

Of course these are only some of the considerations that writers must attempt to integrate during composition of text. Along with selecting and organizing information, writers must also cope with problems of wording. At every point, a potential content must be cast in the form of some syntactic structure. Specific words must be chosen, and these must eventually be transcribed, a process that involves (among other things) spelling, punctuation, and handwriting.

In short, we can view writing as a complicated four-pronged task. On the one hand, a writer must sustain and carry out some overall discourse

plan, which guides the selection and organization of potential content. At the same time, a writer must select wording that transforms potential content into a coherent, unambiguous text. Then text must be transcribed. And throughout, writers must cope with the formidable problem of integrating and orchestrating the many subtasks and procedures involved.

The Purpose of This Paper

The purpose of this paper is to describe how some of these aspects of writing might be acquired and to indicate in a general way what teachers might do to facilitate acquisition. My intention here is not so much to review the developmental literature as to describe the results of a few studies that address certain basic developmental questions and that do so in ways having important implications for writing instruction. My selections have been guided by two considerations.

First, it seemed to me that the heart of the writing process lies in the act of composing, of assembling potential content and transforming it into coherent text, and so my focus has been primarily on these two aspects of writing skill. Unfortunately, this means that I have largely ignored the important problem of transcription. The reader interested in this aspect of writing development should consult Marie Clay's fine report of the development of transcription skills in very young writers (1975) as well as the excellent research concerning children's knowledge of spelling-sound relations by Read (1978) and Chomsky (1979).

Second, it seemed important to focus the discussion on the development of basic level skills, since these form the foundation for all further development in writing. At one point, I had considered including research on the development of these skills in adult writers, but a reading of Mina Shaughnessy's pioneering discussion of basic level college writing (1977) convinced me that I could add nothing to her insightful account. It seems most useful, therefore, to focus on research concerning the development of basic skills during the elementary and junior high school years.

The discussion in this piece emphasizes the point that writing, like many other problem-solving activities, is both an ad hoc and a patterned kind of activity. On the one hand, there is the obvious fact that each new composition represents a new solution to the problem of content organization and wording; on the other, there is the view that much of what writers do comes from their knowledge of conventional patterns of text construction. Given this framework, I will argue that the goals of a writing curriculum must include the development of both ad hoc strategies and conventional knowledge and that in implementing such a curriculum, two sorts of strategies will prove useful. One strategy supposes that beginners will become better at solving composing problems if their assignments and discussions are organized around the structural and functional properties of text. The other supposes that young writers will benefit from activities designed to make these properties available for conscious reflection and articulation.

These points are stressed both in connection with the development of overall plans for a discourse (chapter 2) and the development of skill in transforming those plans into text (chapter 3). The argument is then extended to a discussion of the development of skill in organizing and integrating composing tasks (chapter 4) and a summary of the implications of these discussions for writing instruction (chapter 5).

Chapter 2

Text Concept & Discourse Plans

Concepts and Plans

What is meant by the claim that writers work within the framework of a discourse plan? What are the elements of such a plan? How are they learned? We can begin by noting that writers generally approach their task with some intention to produce a text of a certain genre or type: e.g., a business letter, an editorial, or a recipe. In a sense, we can say that a writer thinks about the task in terms of some notion which he or she holds about the nature of the finished text. These include notions about appropriate content, about its arrangement, and perhaps about its wording. For example, by intending to compose a recipe, a writer has essentially called to mind certain aspects of content and wording of the finished text. That is, it will consist of two distinct parts (a list of ingredients and a list of procedures for preparing and combining these into some edible product); ingredients and procedures will be arranged in an order-of-use sequence; and information about ingredients will be worded as a series of noun phrases while procedures will occur as imperative sentences.

The point is that in planning to produce discourse of a certain type, writers can call to mind certain features of the to-be-composed text, even before the actual writing begins. Essentially, we can say that such knowledge provides a writer with a kind of ready-made plan for making a number of decisions. It can be a powerful aid in assembling potential content, and it can also help in the selection of syntactic structures and vocabulary.

How Knowledge of Text Develops

Most of the current research on the development of text concepts and plans has focused on the way in which children's knowledge of different types of text changes during the school years and, particularly, on the sequence in which different aspects of a text seem to be acquired. For the most part, these efforts have focused on the development of narrative and expository forms that tend to be rather lengthy and complex. Development of children's knowledge of other relatively compact or simple forms (e.g., recipes, personal letters) as well as forms with highly repetitive, predictable surface structures (e.g., riddles, limericks, knock-knock jokes) have received much less attention.

Data from research on narratives suggest that while some initial learning seems to occur fairly early, knowledge of these forms continues to

develop rather slowly throughout the elementary and junior high school years. Thus, we find that by the age of five or six, most children will have developed some knowledge of basic narrative plot structure: their dictated stories will tend to have recognizable protagonists and to be organized around simple conflicts or problems and their resolutions. In addition, by the age of about five, most children will have acquired some knowledge of conventional storytelling language. For example, they are likely to use the introducer "Once upon a time..." and occasionally, the ending marker "...and they lived happily ever after." Although these basic elements appear to be incorporated into many of their early stories, other important narrative elements only begin to occur during the later elementary years. For example, explicit information about characters' motives, plans, and reactions are not routinely incorporated into story writing until the fifth or sixth grades. Similarly, while younger elementary age children are well able to provide coherent descriptions of story actions, it is not until the later elementary and junior high school years that writers routinely begin to add supporting details that enable a reader to envision more precisely how an event occurred (see for example, the discussion of narrative development in Bartlett, 1979).

The resulting text differences are readily apparent in the following two stories, composed by a third and a sixth grader. They were elicited by a researcher as part of a study of narrative development in third through seventh graders and are quite typical of the responses obtained from the more skilled writers at their respective grade levels. In each case, the children were asked to write a story about the same seven-panel cartoon:

> Third grader's text: Once upon a time there were three boys Mo, Larry, Curly. They were Ice skating and Curly, the dum-dum went into the thin ice. He fell in the water trying to keep himself up. Larry & Mo went to a tree, pulled off a branch and Curly, the do-do gripped and Larry & Mo pulled him up & They lived happily ever after.

> Sixth grader's text: It was a crisp, cold day and six boys had just finished a hocky game. Three went home but Henry, Mike and Robby stayed
>
> Robby's team had won and he was being very smug about it. Henry and Mike were disgusted at the way Robby was acting and were trying to ignore him.
>
> Suddenly they heard a loud crack & saw Robby falling. They forgot that they had been mad at Robby: now they were just scared.
>
> "Robby we'll help you!" said a desperate Henry.
>
> Quickly Henry and Mike skated to the nearest tree. They broke off a branch and went back to Robby. But when they tried to pull him out with it, the branch broke.
>
> "Hey guys you better help me quick! My legs are beginning to fell numb!" said Robby in a rasping voice.
>
> Mike had a good idea. He remembered the hockey sticks that were across the lake. He got one and together he and Henry pulled Robby out. Robby was cold but they were happy that he was still alive.

The third grader provides a coherent account of the action, along with a few narrative embellishments: for example, he gives the characters names. Conventional narrative language is also used to open and close the story. At the same time, the writer provides only a rudimentary motivational