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26 Teaching and Testing Writing

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Theoretical and empirical research falling under the scope of second/f[illegible] language (L2) writing covers a vast array of topics and epistemologica[illegible] [illegible]i-tions. Such variety is not undesirable, given that L2 writing is undeni[illegible] a complex process that involves both the cognitive processes of second la[illegible] acquisition (SLA), as well as the genres, purposes, and values of the targ[illegible] discourse community. Although it may be naïve to imagine that research o[illegible] [illegible]r example, the role of working memory in text production and language sociali[illegible]n will ever intersect, we believe that the teaching of writing can be inform[illegible] a variety of perspectives, including, but not limited to, how learners proc[illegible] [illegible]-back (e.g., Sachs & Polio, 2007), and syntactic representations of writin[illegible] [illegible]., Cleland & Pickering, 2006), as well as what students bring to the writin[illegible] [illegible]n terms of cultural identification and experience (e.g., Jarrett, Losh, & Puent[illegible]; Liebowitz, 2006).

Scholars of L2 writing have lamented the lack of a coherent theory o[illegible] [illegible]t-ing (e.g., Hedgcock, 2005). Indeed there are few models of L2 writing, a[illegible] [illegible]e is comprehensive. Some focus on L2 writers' processes (Sasaki, 200[illegible]; Zimmerman, 2000), whereas others focus on the knowledge that writers [illegible]o the writing task and what they share with readers in a discourse comm[illegible]ty (Matsuda, 1997). Wang and Wen (2002) emphasize both the writers' pro[illegible]es and writer knowledge, as well the role of both the first language (L1) and [illegible]2 in the process. Hayes' (1996) model has brought together both cogniti[illegible] [illegible]nd social factors. However, because the Hayes model pertains to L1 writers, [illegible]es not address issues of L2 language proficiency and the role of the L1. A[illegible]l-though this model has been expanded from an earlier cognitive model (Ha[illegible] & Flower, 1980) to include some social factors, its treatment of social facto[illegible] re-mains minimal. It does not address social issues currently being explored in the L2 writing literature, such as race, class, and gender (Kubota, 2003) and [illegible]oice (Helms-Park & Stapleton, 2003; Stapleton, 2002).

In the absence of a comprehensive model of L2 writing, we organize our dis-cussion around some factors that are discussed in the current research and have

influenced the teaching of L2 writing. We begin by exploring the relationship between SLA and writing with a focus on cognitive issues related to text production and language learning. Next, we turn to the writing process and examine the effect that research in this area has had on teaching. Although most of the academic scholarship on the teaching of writing has been conducted in North America, we offer a short exploration of L2 writing instruction in Europe and Asia. We then discuss more recent developments that reflect the social turn in writing pedagogy. Although research in these areas is distinct, each has had an important impact on the teaching of writing. It is essential to keep in mind that L2 writing requires (1) learning an L2, (2) creating a text, and (3) adapting it to a specific discourse community. Next we turn to a brief discussion of assessment issues.

Cognitive Factors in Learning to Write

An understanding of SLA is essential for those interested in teaching writing. Learners need to acquire and generate the L2 in order to write in it. However, this is not a one-way process: writing can facilitate general language proficiency and teachers can use writing to promote other skills. The impact of writing on oral skills has not been widely researched (see Weissberg, 2006; Williams, 2008). Weissberg (2000), in a study of adult L2 classroom learners, demonstrated that new forms emerged first in journal writing and only later were the learners willing or able to use those forms orally. Harklau (2002) also found earlier emergence in the writing of high school ESL students. In addition, she convincingly showed that these learners had greater access to written input, generated more written language than oral, and received more feedback on their writing than on speech. A complete overview of the relationship of writing and SLA is, however, beyond the scope of this chapter, and we have therefore chosen to limit our discussion to two specific areas: writing as focus on form and pushed output, and written error correction.

Writing as focus on form and pushed output

There has been extensive discussion in SLA research and language teaching regarding the role of form-focused instruction (for reviews, see Ellis, 2001; Norris & Ortega, 2000; Spada, 1997; Williams, 2005). Although form-focused instruction is often seen as a teacher's attempt to draw learners' attention to form, the simple act of writing can help learners pay attention to language form, even without any teacher intervention. Kim et al. (2001) showed that writing allowed elementary school ESL students to "make language 'stand still' so that it can be inspected closely, carefully, and deliberately" (p. 339). The modality provides learners with a record of their language that they can look at and monitor, which, in speaking, would result in reduced fluency. This was stated quite explicitly by Cumming (1990), drawing on Swain's (1985) work on output as a means of facilitating acquisition. He stated:

> Composition writing elicits an attention to form–meaning relations that may prompt learners to refine their linguistic expression – and hence their control over their linguistic knowledge – so that it is more accurately representative of their thoughts and of standard usage. (p. 483)

With regard to empirical research, recent studies suggest learners can and do pay attention to language form in written texts. Wong (2001) showed that learners can attend to form and meaning at the same time in the written, but not oral, modality. Studies have also shown that when students are provided with copies of their own writing, they can correct many of their own errors without any feedback or any specific instructions on how to edit their writing (Gass, 1983; Polio, Fleck, & Leder, 1998). Of course, with teacher intervention and strategy instruction, students may be able to correct more of their errors (Ferris, 2002).

There is also evidence that learners' attention to form increases in certain collaborative writing activities. Swain (1998) used a dictogloss, a task in which students reconstruct passages after listening to them, as a way to help them focus on form while expressing meaning. Students worked in pairs after taking notes on a passage and were able to reflect consciously on their own output. Storch (2005) studied students writing essays alone and in pairs. She found that the students working in pairs produced more grammatically accurate and syntactically complex essays. Thus, both the modality and the collaborative nature of the output activity enhanced the opportunities to focus on form.

Swain began this line of research in response to the disappointing level of grammatical accuracy of many learners in Canadian immersion programs. She argued, among other things, that learners were not producing enough language and that output helps learners notice problems and gaps in their language. Swain maintained that in order for learners to progress, they needed to complete tasks that would help them move beyond their current levels by producing what she called pushed output. In such tasks, learners try out new grammatical structures and/or vocabulary that they may not have mastered. Dictoglosses, in addition to increasing learners' attention to form, also pushed their output because they had to produce language that was not their own and was beyond their current level. In two other studies, Qi and Lapkin (2001) and Sachs and Polio (2007) used reformulation tasks, in which learners rewrote their drafts following reformulation by native speakers. In both studies, learners paid attention to language form as they tried to produce output beyond the level of their current knowledge. In addition, students in both studies noticed gaps in their language as they were trying to produce their original texts.

One key to the effectiveness of writing tasks in promoting focus on form and pushed output may be planning opportunities. Several studies of oral language (e.g., Foster & Skehan, 1996; Ortega, 1999) have shown that giving students time to plan before they speak improves their oral language production, specifically their fluency and syntactic complexity, although not their grammatical accuracy. Ellis and Yuan (2004) extended this line of research to writing. They examined the writing of learners when they were given time to plan what they were going

to write and when they were not. They also included an online planning condition in which participants were not given time to plan but rather were given unlimited time to write. They found the same results as the studies of oral language: pre-task planning improved fluency and complexity but not accuracy. Accuracy did improve, however, in the online planning condition.

Grammar error correction

Error correction in writing is probably the most debated and controversial topic in the field. Yet despite many empirical studies and polemical discussions, and the fact that learners, and often teachers (I. Lee, 2004), prefer comprehensive feedback on language, the question of the effectiveness of written error correction remains unresolved. (For a comprehensive review of the research and issues see Ferris, 2002, 2004, 2006.) Truscott (1996) propelled the issue to the forefront of the field when he stated, "Grammar has no place in writing classes and should be abandoned" (p. 361). He correctly argued that no studies at that time had shown any long-term benefits for error correction. He also maintained that correction is harmful because it diverts teachers' time from other tasks that might be more helpful to their students. Furthermore, it may cause students to use simpler language and take fewer risks to avoid making errors.

One reason for the lack of consensus rests in the design of the studies. There are logistical problems in implementing carefully controlled studies. Establishing definitions and reliable measures of various constructs has also proven challenging. It is difficult to ensure that all factors but error correction are held constant, and for ethical reasons, it is even more difficult to include a control group that receives no error correction. In addition, the operationalization of error correction has varied and been extended to pedagogical techniques, such as underlining and coding errors. Ten years after Truscott's challenge, the issue has still not been resolved. Although several studies that have showed that teachers' error corrections on a draft result in more grammatically accurate revisions (Ashwell, 2000; Chandler, 2003; Fathman & Whalley, 1990; Ferris, 2006), none has convincingly shown any long-term effect on learners' writing. Polio et al. (1998) found no long-term effect when students' writing from an error correction group and a control group were compared over the course of a semester. The problem with this and other studies is that a lack of difference between the two groups can be attributed to a myriad of factors, including the lack of a sufficiently reliable measure of grammatical accuracy (Polio, 1997; Wolfe-Quintero, Inagaki, & Kim, 1998), lack of a control group, too short a treatment period, or study-external factors, such as other instruction that students were receiving at the time of the study.

In an attempt to show a long-term effect for error correction, Chandler (2003) compared two groups, one that received error correction and one that simply had their errors underlined by the teacher. At the end of 10 weeks, she compared the learners' accuracy on a new piece of writing. The error correction group did better than the group which had their errors underlined. However, there are two

problems with the study: first the error correction group wrote twice as much as the underline group. Second, Chandler examined only grammatical accuracy. As Truscott (2004) correctly pointed out, it is possible that the error correction caused students to write more correct but less complex sentences in an effort to avoid making errors.

Bitchener, Young, and Cameron (2005) compared students who received no feedback, students who received direct explicit correction, and students who received direct explicit correction plus teacher–student conferences. They found no difference in the three groups' overall improvement over 12 weeks, but did find that the error correction-plus-conference group did better on certain grammatical features. Furthermore, learners did not progress in a linear manner. Despite flaws similar to those described for Chandler's study, the results underscore the complexity of learner response to error correction over time.

Although findings on the effectiveness of an explicit focus on form in L2 writing have been less than conclusive, in SLA more generally, two reviews of research (Ellis, 2001; Norris & Ortega, 2000) have argued that explicit focus on language form, which includes error correction, does facilitate acquisition. Others have argued for more implicit ways of drawing learner attention to forms, in particular, the use of recasts. Although the usefulness of oral recasts remains controversial (see, e.g., Lyster, 2004; Panova & Lyster, 2002), many studies have shown their effectiveness (Doughty & Varela, 1998; Leeman, 2003; Long, 2007; Mackey, 2006; Mackey & Goo, 2007; Mackey & Philp, 1998; Philp, 2003). If oral recasts are effective, written error corrections in the form of recasts should be especially effective (e.g., Ayoun, 2004), because, as we have noted, in writing, learners are more likely to perceive the correction and have more time to focus on their language during production, although unlike oral recasts, they are not offered during communication.

The Writing Process and Process Approach

Researchers began studying writers' processes in reaction to the current-traditional approach (or traditional paradigm). This approach to L1 writing instruction stressed reading literary texts and reproducing models of various rhetorical modes, with little attention to how writers write. Both the expressivist and the cognitive approaches developed in response to this long-entrenched pedagogy. The expressivists emphasized writing as a process of discovering meaning and personal voice. In the classroom, this approach was manifested as activities to generate and discover ideas and as a reduced focus on accuracy. The cognitive approach, in contrast, viewed writing as a problem-solving activity. Students were encouraged to brainstorm, plan, get feedback, and revise. After some debate (e.g., Hamp-Lyons, 1986; Horowitz, 1986), it became clear that the insights of the expressivist and cognitive approaches, and even a concern for formal accuracy, need not be mutually exclusive. Today, the term "process writing" has come to mean many things, but in general, it casts writing as an exploratory and

recursive, rather than linear, pre-determined process. In the classroom, a process approach has come to mean that teachers, and often peers, intervene at one or several points in the writing process (Susser, 1994). Process writing in its various forms has dominated L1 and L2 writing classrooms for the past 20 years, and even most FL classrooms (Reichelt, 2001), at least in North America. We begin with a discussion of research on the general writing process and then discuss the ways that teachers can intervene, in particular, with the use of effective peer feedback.

Second language learners' composing processes

Krappels (1990) comprehensively reviewed research on L2 writing processes and concluded that although the quality of research had improved, the small scale of these studies made it difficult to generalize the results, which were often contradictory. Sixteen years later, research on the writing process continues, but is still somewhat difficult to interpret, particularly with regard to how it should inform classroom teaching. Several different techniques have been used to investigate the writing process. The most common is the think-aloud protocol, in which learners talk about what they are writing as they do it, but other techniques, including stimulated recall, have also been used. Each method carries its own set of problems (see Polio, 2003, for a review of the various methods), not the least of which is the time-consuming nature of the procedures, with the result that studies of the writing process rely on extremely small sample sizes. As such, it remains difficult to generalize about what L2 writers do as they write. Furthermore, data are collected in controlled settings, allowing researchers to maximize the reliability of their results. However, such settings bear little resemblance to real-life writing situations and, although this does not invalidate the studies, it does limit the generalizability of the findings.

Silva and Brice (2004) surveyed research on the writing process more recently and concluded that studies have become more focused, in that many have examined one specific aspect of the writing process. Studies of the general writing process of specific groups of students (e.g., Bosher, 1998; Roca de Larios, Murphy, & Manchon, 1999) can draw teachers' attention to possible problems that these learners encounter while writing. Studies that focus on one particular aspect of writing may be more informative. For example, Christianson (1997) studied how learners used dictionaries while writing, and was able to identify specific problems that cause learners to use inappropriate words. Roca de Larios, Manchon, and Murphy (2006) examined only formulation, that is, the point at which ideas were verbalized or written.

Probably of most use to writing teachers, however, are studies of the writing process after a specific kind of instruction. Several studies have investigated early stages of the writing process, for example, pedagogical techniques that encourage extended prewriting. Prewriting is an essential component of a process approach, and most textbooks devote a substantial amount of space to getting students to generate ideas, but surprisingly little research has examined prewriting

techniques. Lally (2000) studied the effects of idea generation in students' L1 and L2, in this case English and French, respectively. Although she did not find a statistically significant difference in essay quality, she raised the issue of the use of the L1 in prewriting activities. In another important study, Shi (1998) studied prewriting under three different conditions: no discussion, teacher-led discussion, and peer discussion. Her results were complex, but she did not find a clear benefit in essay quality for any one condition.

Using both cross-sectional and longitudinal data, Sasaki (2000) studied the differences in the writing process of novices and experts before and after instruction. Using different methods to triangulate the data, she concluded, among other things, that after instruction, novice writers began to use some of the strategies of skilled writers, such as global planning and rereading. They did not, however, write more fluently. Effect-of-instruction studies such as this can shed light on what is teachable. In contrast, in studies that simply compare novice and expert (or skilled and unskilled) writers (e.g., Zamel, 1983), one cannot infer a cause–effect relationship between specific strategies and writing quality.

Teacher feedback

Intervention at various points in a students' writing process is one of the main features of the process approach. Teacher feedback that focuses on content and organization has received a huge amount of attention, and a complete summary is not possible here. (Comprehensive discussions can be found in Ferris, 2003; and Goldstein, 2005.) One of the issues related to written feedback is the difficulty students have with interpreting feedback and whether or not they actually respond to it. Although feedback can be confusing (Cohen & Cavalcanti, 1990), many students do respond to it when rewriting their papers (Ferris, 1997). Students and teachers need to communicate clearly about feedback. Goldstein (2005) gives suggestions for students to help their teachers in this respect. For example, she recommends that students complete cover sheets for their essays that direct the teacher to the students' perceived problems.

Other research has examined feedback in writing conferences. Goldstein and Conrad (1990) and Patthey-Chavez and Ferris (1997) found that topics that were negotiated were more likely to be revised than topics for which the teachers simply provided suggestions. Others have extended writing conference research to the context of writing centers. This is an important area of inquiry because of the proliferation of such centers, at least in North America, as well as the increase in number of L2 learners who use them. Writing centers were originally created for native-speaker peer tutoring using a nondirective approach (Williams & Severino, 2004). This approach differs from peer response, discussed below, because there is an implicit assumption, especially for L2 learners, that the peer tutor has more expertise in writing and in the L2. Williams (2004) studied L2 writers with their peer tutors and found, like Goldstein and Conrad (1990), that more revisions occurred when students participated, but also that more direct suggestions were more helpful. Jones et al. (2006) examined online vs. face-to-face

tutoring in a writing center in Hong Kong. They found that more equal participation took place in the online sessions, and that participants in online sessions focused more on global issues, whereas those in the face-to-face sessions focused more on language issues.

Peer response

Peer response (also called peer review or peer feedback) is another intervention that is common in process writing classrooms. Over the last 15 years, there has been extensive research on the effectiveness of peer response in L2 writing instruction. (Peer response here refers to feedback on content and organization. We know of no studies in which peers were instructed to correct grammar.) The effects of peer response have been examined in the short term, from draft to revision, and in the long term. Research on peer review has also addressed the quality of writing, and students' attitudes as indicator of the benefits of peer review, as well as the types of revisions that students make in response to peer feedback. For comprehensive reviews, see Hyland and Hyland (2006), Liu and Hansen (2002), and Rollinson (2005).

With regard to attitudes, some studies have shown that learners prefer teacher feedback to learner feedback when given a choice (Zhang, 1995). Jacobs et al. (1998), however, surveyed Hong Kong and Taiwanese EFL students, almost all of whom said that they preferred to have both peer feedback and teacher feedback. McGroarty and Zhu (1997) found that students who were trained in peer review had a more positive attitude toward it than students who were not.

Other researchers have assessed the quality of learner feedback. Mendonça and Johnson (1994) studied learners' oral comments and found that responders initiated negotiations when they did not understand their peers' meaning, and gave suggestions to improve the writing, but interestingly, almost never corrected grammar. McGroarty and Zhu (1997) studied the effects of training on response quality. They compared two groups of university ESL students, one which had received extensive training on peer review and one which had not. They found that the students who received the training gave significantly more feedback, and more global and relevant feedback. In this sense, the training was successful, but a more important question is whether peer response results in more successful revision and, furthermore, whether it has any long-term effect.

McGroarty and Zhu (1997) examined the effects of peer response training on the quality of learners' writing. They compared the holistic writing scores of trained and untrained students and found that even though the trained group was giving more substantial comments, the essays revised on the basis of these comments did not receive higher ratings. To determine the long-term effects of peer review training, they compared the end-of-the-term writing portfolios of the two groups and found that the trained group performed only a little better. Berg (1999) also examined the effects of peer reviewing training on student writing. She examined effectiveness not by looking at the comments or the students' attitudes, but rather by studying the revisions the students made, and

like McGroarty and Zhu, the overall quality of the writing. She found the learners who had received training made more meaning-based changes than those who had not received training. More important, the trained groups' essays were rated significantly higher on a holistic scale than those of the untrained group. These findings need to be interpreted cautiously because it is not known whether the meaning-based revisions and higher holistic scores were the results of comments received from trained peers or from the training the writers themselves received. In either case, however, the training was effective.

The conclusion from this research is that peer response instruction, not peer response itself, is beneficial. Even though the long-term effects have not been clearly shown, other benefits exists: learners spend more time speaking in the target language, the training or response may help the learners revise their own writing, and it may help reduce teachers' workload.

Writing Pedagogy outside of North America

Although process pedagogies have long dominated North American classrooms, this has not always been the case elsewhere. English is the dominant foreign language in most settings outside of North America and is certainly the only one in which there exists significant research on writing. We therefore limit our discussion to English. Most descriptions of ELT outside North America do not focus specifically on writing. In China, for example, writing instruction is viewed as part of the "holistic development of the students' English ability rather than a separate course" (You, 2004a, p. 256). At the university level, L2 writing instruction has been influenced by the globalization of Western writing pedagogies (Cahill, 1999; You, 2004b), but more powerfully by the tests that determine students' futures: The College English Test (CET) and the National Matriculation English Test (NMET). In spite of many teachers' awareness of more labor-intensive approaches to writing instruction, including genre and process pedagogies, the realities of large classes, students' relatively low proficiency, overworked and underpaid teachers, and lack of teacher preparation have forced most teachers to teach to these tests and utilize more traditional pedagogies involving models and memorization (You, 2004a, 2004b).

In both Japan and Korea, the situation is similar, even when this is at odds with national curricula that espouse more meaning-based and collaborative pedagogies (Butler & Iino, 2005; Chang, 2004; Gates, 2003; Gorsuch, 1998; Kubota, 2001). Most important are high-stakes tests, which may not assess writing directly, instead testing sentence-level knowledge and the ability to reproduce models (Kikuchi, 2006). Most writing instruction in both the L1 and the L2 at the secondary level in Japan is aimed at passing these examinations (Kobayashi & Rinnert, 2002). Chang (2004) compared the teaching of writing in Korean middle and high school to the Seventh National Curriculum, which called for a greater emphasis on communication. She found that the vast majority of writing activities were closed ended and focused on grammatical accuracy. Textbooks included minimal open-ended writing activity, and 77 percent of the high school students in her sample reported

never having written more than a paragraph in English. Gates (2003) reports similar findings for Japan, in that classroom practices and textbooks were at odds with the Ministry of Education's guidelines to give all language teaching, including writing instruction, a greater focus on the expression of meaning.

In Europe, although it is difficult to make generalizations across such a wide variety of contexts, instruction in FL writing has generally taken a back seat to instruction in oral communication in recent years. However, interest in improving written proficiency is increasing (Reichelt, 1997, 2005). In countries that have a tradition of explicit L1 writing instruction (e.g., Germany), explicit instruction in L2 writing is considered unnecessary because learners can draw on their knowledge of writing in their L1. In contexts without a tradition of formal or explicit teaching of L1 writing, such as Poland and Ukraine, instruction has either tended to focus on personal essays or become a pretext for formal practice of newly acquired vocabulary and grammar (Reichelt, 1997; Tarnopolsky, 2000).

In the past 20 years, the teaching and assessment (see Assessing Writing, below) of foreign languages in general, including writing, across Europe have been dominated by the development of the Common European Frame of Reference (CEFR) by the Council of Europe (Council of Europe, 2001). The CEFR is not aimed at creating uniformity of instruction across the continent; rather, it was developed to assist learners, teachers, materials and curriculum designers, and testers toward a common understanding of language proficiency and language use, including writing (Figueras et al., 2005; Heyworth, 2006). It does not explicitly state any specific pedagogy, but assumes a "communicative, action-based, learner-centred view of language learning" (Heyworth, p. 181). Perhaps more important, it provides "the most comprehensive and broad-based effort to create holistic and analytic scales of language use and language competence, and to employ sound empirical methods for deriving useful descriptors of the same" (Norris, 2005, p. 399).

The Frame of Reference consists of descriptors of language proficiency at six global levels. There are also self-assessment grids and rating scales that include a section on what the learner can do in writing. There are both general descriptors (e.g., *I can write simple connected text on topics which are familiar or of personal interest. I can write personal letters describing experiences and impressions*), more detailed breakdowns of writing competencies, and "Can do" descriptions in terms of particular contexts, such as tourism, work, and study (e.g., *CAN write to a hotel to ask about the availability of services, for example, facilities for the disabled*), which are designed to link the CEFR to assessment instruments, such as the ALTE Can Do Project (Council of Europe, 2001, Appendix D), the computer-based diagnostic test DIALANG (Alderson & Huhta, 2005), and the European Language Portfolio for learner self-assessment (Little, 2005).

Post-Process Approaches

A greater diversity of approaches has also begun to characterize L2 writing instruction in North America. In the last 10 years, there has been a growing trend away from process writing in the academy, although this is largely not the case

in L2 writing classrooms. There are several reasons why writing scholars have questioned reliance on process approaches in L2 settings, not the least of which is that elements of this approach turned out to be ineffective in some contexts outside of the North American university classroom or with writers from disparate cultural backgrounds (Carson & Nelson, 1996; Holliday, 1994; Hu, 2005; Pennycook, 1996; Ramanathan & Atkinson, 1999; Shen, 1989). Writing instruction has taken a social turn, via various, sometimes overlapping, sometimes conflicting, routes. The major developments have been in the areas of genre-based and situated learning pedagogies, sociocultural approaches, and critical pedagogy.

Genre-based writing instruction

Probably the most influential of these approaches are genre-based pedagogies. One of the most potent objections to process writing instruction was to its early emphasis on individual voice and self-discovery (e.g., Horowitz, 1986). Some have objected that the dominant place for voice and the expression of meaning has been accompanied by a diminution in the importance of formal features of writing. This can create problems, particularly for non-mainstream learners, including L2 writers (Graff, 2003; Hinkel, 2002, 2004; Hyland, 2004; Scarcella, 2002). Delpit's (1999) objections to such pedagogy, although focused primarily on the struggles of African-American learners, might apply equally to L2 writers. Such an approach, she argues, disadvantages minority learners. The self-discovery process assumes a great deal of cultural knowledge that middle-class American students may well have. Yet, it is far less likely that L2 writers will have access to the same knowledge, and they are often left guessing as to what they are supposed to be learning or discovering. As result, there have been calls for more "visible pedagogy" (Bernstein, 1990, p. 90) in which what they are to learn is made clear to students.

One such visible pedagogy is the teaching of genres. Genre means different things to different scholars; however, it is generally considered to be recurring or characteristic textual (oral or written) responses to the requirements of the social context. Most genre scholars will agree that genres are socially constructed and goal-oriented (Martin, 1992). Written genres can only be understood within a specific context and they are produced for specific social purposes. Although specific approaches to genre differ, all agree that it essential that the language and functions of texts be viewed together, in both research and pedagogy.

Genre theorists differ, however, with respect to the extent that they emphasize language and rhetorical structures or the social contexts of writing (J. Flowerdew, 2002; Hyon, 1996; Pang, 2002). Scholars who focus on linguistic features are more frequently associated with the Sydney School and the work of Michael Halliday. This work has been highly influential, especially in Australia, where it has been used extensively to develop secondary school curricula. Studies within this functional-systemic approach have examined how registers are constructed from linguistic resources to achieve particular meanings within specific contexts, for example, the research article or the medical report. Writers need to master these

registers to be successful within specific contexts. Genre-based writing instruction lays bare the linguistic and rhetorical bones of different registers in order to facilitate this mastery. This approach has been widely adopted in ESP pedagogy, in which learners receive explicit instruction on the complex linguistic and discourse demands of scientific and other discipline-specific forms of writing (e.g., Dudley-Evans, 1997; Jacoby, Leech, & Holten, 1995; Swales, 1990), as well as, to a lesser extent, in foreign language pedagogy (e.g., Byrnes & Sprang, 2003; Swaffer, 2003).

A second, more socially oriented approach, still focusing on genre, is usually associated with New Rhetoric, based on the writings of Bakhtin, but also drawing on the work of Lave and Wenger (1991) on situated learning. Bakhtin maintains that language is inherently dialogic, connecting the past to the present, new texts to previous texts, and speakers and writers to their social context, in particular, their audience. Language learning, too, is viewed as dialogic, taking place within social interaction, rather than within individuals (Johnson, 2004). Research applying these theories to L2 acquisition is relatively new, and applications to L2 writing instruction have been largely exploratory (e.g., Adam & Artemeva, 2002; Braxley, 2005; Orr, 2005). Finally, situated learning approaches view learning as a social process, embedded in relationships between experts and novices, rather than as the transfer of knowledge. There have been few attempts to incorporate situated learning into L2 writing instruction, perhaps because most institutional instruction in L2 writing does not lend itself to *legitimate peripheral participation*, the term Lave and Wenger use to describe the initial stages of situated learning. As Johns (1995b) has pointed out, most L2 writing classrooms provide instruction in school genres (e.g., the five-paragraph essay, the research paper), which differ considerably from authentic genres, making the sort of apprenticeship described in situated learning all the more difficult to achieve.

Genre-based writing pedagogy as a whole has arisen, in part, because of dissatisfaction with process instruction that often casts writing as a solitary process taking place inside the brains of individual learners, but also as result of a new understanding of literacy as not just a cognitive competence, but a purposeful social process, as well. Hyland (2004) describes some of the advantages of genre-based writing pedagogy over process approaches. Most important, it is explicit and systematic; it is clear from the outset what students are to learn and the path by which they are to arrive at this goal. In addition, the genres chosen for instruction are based on student needs. Genre theorists, such as Hyland (1990, 2004), Feez (2002), and Christie (1989), also claim that making genres explicit and offering a staged pedagogy for understanding them provides students with access to the discourses of power, which may be obscured in more implicit process pedagogies.

Genre theory in writing instruction has not been without detractors. (For reviews of these arguments, see Benesch, 2001; Johns, 1995a). Some feel that genres are embedded in their social contexts in ways that are too complex to divorce them from these contexts and teach them in the classroom (Adam & Artemeva, 2002; Freedman & Adam, 2000). They argue that genres must remain anchored to their original contexts in order to be learned successfully, suggesting the need for

a more situated pedagogy. A second objection is that genres are merely recipes. Kay and Dudley-Evans (1998), in a survey of teacher attitudes toward genre, found that many teachers felt that genre instruction could easily become similar to the rhetorical modes instruction of earlier current-traditional approaches, in which learners were taught formulaic modes of writing with little attention paid to their communicative purpose. Genre theorists acknowledge that genres do constrain learners' choices, but counter that such limits are, in fact, important for them to learn. Instruction that is unconstrained may result in learners' failure to learn dominant discourse modes and would ultimately be a disservice to learners (Christie, 1989; Hyland, 2004). Finally, critical theorists argue that teaching students the genres of dominant discourses merely recapitulates current power structures and only gives the illusion of access to power (Benesch, 1995, 2001; Canagarajah, 2002; Luke, 1996). This may be particularly applicable to second language and second dialect speakers, most of whom are already in relatively less powerful positions in society.

Perhaps the most important criticism, however, is that there is very little research on the impact of genre-based approaches in L2 writing instruction (Hyon, 2002). Only a few preliminary studies have been published (e.g., Henry & Roseberry, 1998; Reppen, 1995). Most writing on the topic tends to lay out the case for genre pedagogy and offer careful linguistic, rhetorical, and sometimes social analyses of existing genres (e.g., Hyland, 1990; Schleppegrell, 2001, 2004). Others offer pedagogical suggestions for curriculum development and instruction (e.g., Bhatia, 1991; Hyland, 2004; Johns, 1997; Macken-Horarik, 2002; Schleppegrell & Achugar, 2003; Swales & Feak, 1994). At this point, however, it is difficult to do more than speculate on the effectiveness of genre-based pedagogies in promoting either L2 acquisition or L2 writing proficiency.

As noted, one of the strengths of genre analyses is their careful exploration of the linguistic and rhetorical features of texts. These efforts have been significantly aided by advances in corpus linguistics. Pioneered by Sinclair (1990), this work allows genre analysts to look for patterns in massive amounts of linguistic data, controlling for genre. It is possible to determine which words cluster together or how particular words function within specific genres (Biber, Conrad, & Reppen, 1998; Biber et al., 1999; Hunston & Francis, 2000). The insights of these analyses have been incorporated into proposals for writing instruction (Belcher, 2006; Biber et al., 2002; Burnard & McEnerny, 2000; L. Flowerdew, 2003; Gaskill & Cobb, 2004; Hinkel, 2002; O'Sullivan & Chambers, 2006; Partington, 1998; Starfield, 2004; Tribble, 2002), either in the development of learner corpora or in activities that allow learners to explore the meaning and use of words and phrases, detect and correct errors, and make more targetlike word choices through the use of concordances and other corpus tools.

Sociocultural approaches

Unlike genre-based approaches to L2 writing, sociocultural approaches have largely been confined to research studies. Sociocultural theory (SCT), based on

the work of Lev Vygotsky, argues "that the most important forms of human cognitive activity develop through interaction within these social and material environments" (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006, pp. 197–8). Many of the central constructs of SCT lend themselves easily to the writing classroom. Vygotsky maintains that learning reflects a process of internalization, that is, "the process of making what was once external assistance a resource that is internally available to the individual" (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006, p. 200). Both researchers and educators have been captivated by the construct *zone of proximal development* (ZPD), that is, the distance between the level of actual development and the level of potential development when assisted by another, either a more capable actor or a peer. This notion of assistance, often called scaffolding, fits in with many of the activities that are familiar in process pedagogy (Weissberg, 2006). As noted above, current classroom practice often includes collaborative peer work. One rationale for this practice is that together, learners may be able to accomplish what they could not do alone, a notion very much in keeping with one of the tenets of SCT – that collaborative learning precedes and promotes individual development.

Although there are a considerable number of studies of L2 writing that have applied the insights of SCT to the analysis of learner data (de Guerrero & Villamil, 2000, Nassaji & Cumming, 2000; Parks et al., 2006; Swain & Lapkin, 2002; Villamil & de Guerrero, 2006), there have been fewer attempts to use the insights of SCT directly in the L2 classroom; Aljaafreh and Lantolf (1994) and a follow-up study by Nassaji and Swain (2000) are two important exceptions. They show how SCT can be used to guide the provision of feedback to L2 writers, in particular, to address their linguistic development. Aljaafreh and Lantolf document the performance of an L2 writer assisted by an expert tutor. They show how the ZPD can be operationalized to deliver effective feedback: Feedback must be graduated, contingent, and continuously negotiated between the expert and novice. In other words, assistance must be offered that "encourages the learner to function at his or her potential level of ability" (p. 468). Both the amount and nature of necessary feedback are likely to change as the learner appropriates the process; hence, the need for continuous dialogue and negotiation. Aljaafreh and Lantolf developed a scale to reflect this transition from the other-regulated stage (performance assisted by the tutor) to the self-regulated stage (unassisted performance). They matched the type of feedback to the learner's progress through these stages, resulting in a continuous negotiation of the ZPD. They claim that this type of feedback was an effective tool in facilitating the L2 writer's accurate use of English articles, and that the writer's development was revealed not only in production but also by the quality of the assistance required to perform the activity. In other words, the performance within the ZPD revealed not just performance but potential that shows the future direction of development. It is important to note, however, that development was operationalized as use during the tutoring session; long-term changes were not documented.

Nassaji and Swain (2000) followed up the Aljaafreh and Lantolf study with a more controlled, although still small, instructional study. They compared the effect of feedback on article use provided within the ZPD with random feedback.

The student who received negotiated assistance in response to her ZPD made greater and more consistent progress than the students who received non-negotiated feedback on errors. The dynamic nature of the ZPD makes its use in instruction both a challenge and an opportunity. Lantolf has suggested there may be future important applications of SCT, and specifically the ZPD construct, in assessment, because the ZPD allows researchers and testers to focus prospectively on learner development, as well as on current unassisted performance (Johnson, 2004; Poehner & Lantolf, 2005).

Critical pedagogy

Critical pedagogy spans far beyond the teaching of writing, or L2 instruction, and originates in the work of Freire, Foucault, Fairclough, and Kress. It comes into writing pedagogy in the form of *critical literacy*. Advocates of critical approaches argue that previous pedagogies reinforce power relationships and simply teach writers to adopt stances and genres that maintain their powerless positions (Benesch, 2001; Canagarajah, 2002; Leeman, 2005). Instead they advocate a pedagogy that will help learners become aware of those relationships, articulate them, and ideally, challenge them. In particular, critical pedagogy emphasizes the need to situate writing instruction within a social and political context that extends beyond the classroom, and to see the classroom itself as a social and political context with its own power relationships (Liebowitz, 2006; Wallace, 2001).

In contrast to genre-based pedagogies, there are few fully described examples of critical writing curricula. Wallace (2001) gives one of the more detailed descriptions of a course grounded in critical pedagogy. Much of it is engaged in developing critical awareness of texts within specific contexts. Yet, it is interesting to note that in addressing how writing is actually to be done, Wallace relies on the work of genre theorists and systemic functional linguistics. In other words, critical theory was the foundation for the students' exploration of literacy practices and power relationships. For instruction on how to write and on language choice, Wallace turns to Halliday.

Other descriptions of critical English for academic purposes (EAP) writing courses are less forthcoming, or perhaps they simply assume reliance on by-now-traditional process approaches (e.g., Benesch, 1998, 2001; Smoke, 2001). Instead, the course descriptions focus on raising awareness, with activities such as literacy journals and narratives, reflections on learning strategies, and ethnographic projects (Benesch, 2001; Canagarajah, 2002). They also stress thinking critically about topics that may be new to L2 learners, often with politically charged themes. Canagarajah suggests that an increased awareness of power relationships and the struggle against them may even extend to considerations of form, particularly as regards L2 writing instruction for World English users (2002, 2006). For example, he advocates a rethinking of errors as "choices," and of feedback on error as "negotiation" (2002, p. 52).

Morgan and Ramanathan (2005) describe activities in the critical literacy toolkit as it applies to L2 instruction in academic settings. They advocate the use of

personal narratives that link the experience of individuals to power relationships in the larger sociopolitical context, encourage learners to question disciplinary texts, and promote reflection on individual participation in power structures, and especially, how the structures are evident in texts. Courses designed to encourage critical literacy may also include assignments that are immediately relevant to the learners, such as writing letters of protest to the university administration or articulating areas of conflict with a teacher, landlord, or community leader. Again, however, there is usually little mention of how writing is taught or practiced. This may mean that the critical pedagogy begins and ends with consideration and discussion of social and political contexts, and issues with instruction with nuts and bolts of writing, with ideas on issues of rhetorical and linguistics form drawn from other sources.

Critical approaches to L2 writing instruction have come under fire from two directions. First, many who favor genre pedagogy argue that critical literacy instruction, like the more expressivist strands of process instruction, are likely to disadvantage non-mainstream learners (Johns, 1995b, 2003; Swales, 1990). They argue that it is unfair to ask learners to question dominant discourses before they can use them. Instead, it is an educator's responsibility to give students access to these genres and help them toward mastery. Once they have gained access to these discourses, struggling against them should be left up to the learners and left out of the classroom. Another objection is that the focus on ideology is simply another form of hegemony, a misguided effort by intellectuals and ideologues to impose their own agenda on L2 learners (Allison, 1994; Santos, 1992, 2001) when learners' needs lie elsewhere.

All of these approaches that have taken the social turn share a deep appreciation for the social, and often political, context in which L2 writers must learn and live, and the belief that any effective writing instruction must take the context of writing into account, even as they advocate different ways for providing such instruction.

Assessing Writing

The purposes of L2 assessment are varied, and L2 writing assessment is no exception. Researchers have addressed ways to assess writing for research purposes, for large-scale testing (generally for gate-keeping and placement purposes), and for classroom feedback and grading. Assessing writing for research purposes generally involves measuring some aspect of a piece of writing to answer a research question, such as "Which type of error correction works best?" or "How does students' writing differ on two types of writing tasks?" Research studies generally use quantitative measures that can involve holistic measures of quality, analytic scales that break down writing into various components, or more objective measures, such as words per T-unit, errors per T-unit, or lexical type-token ratios. Objective measures have also been examined as possible measures of L2 writing development, in other words, how learners' writing changes over time

(de Haan & van Esch, 2005; Ortega, 2003; Shaw & Liu, 1998; Wolfe-Quintero et al., 1998). Assessing writing for research purposes is beyond the scope of this paper; we focus here on assessment for such purposes as placement, gate-keeping, diagnostic, and achievement purposes. The majority of scholarly work on writing assessment focuses on large-scale assessment for a variety of reasons, including the availability of large samples of data. Furthermore, large educational and testing institutions are perhaps aware of the scrutiny that their practices may come under, and thus need to demonstrate the reliability and validity of their tests publicly. Therefore, what follows is a discussion of the issues and research in large-scale testing, and a relatively brief discussion of the classroom and alternative assessment.

Large-scale testing

As Hamp-Lyons states, ". . . few ESL professionals these days are prepared to believe that we can test writing by any means other than having students actually write" (2003, p. 165). Although in the past, some tests included indirect assessments of writing skills, today, most large-scale writing assessment requires students to write. This change came about as a concern for content validity and task authenticity, related to both the ethical issues behind assessing writing, and also the negative washback that can occur in classrooms if writing is assessed only through indirect tests. As noted in the discussion of L2 writing instruction, particularly in Asia, when national tests do not assess writing, teachers may not teach writing at all.

In order to develop a writing test, a test being a sample of behavior, one first needs to determine the purpose of the test and what skills a student is expected to have. Various frameworks for a variety of contexts have been developed, often with the goal of determining what skills should be assessed, such as in the European Common Framework. Another example is the Canadian Language Benchmarks (Nagy & Stewart, 2000), standards that can be used to assess language for work and study. For the writing component, descriptors range from "I can take a phone message with 5–7 details" to "I can write a complex formal research report of ten typed pages." Although the National Foreign Language Standards in the US (National Standards Foreign Language Project, 1996), used for K-12 contexts, are much less specific, the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages guidelines (Breiner-Sanders, Swender, & Terry, 2001) do offer descriptors at various levels, and include tasks like "Can write all the symbols in an alphabetic or syllabic system or 50–100 characters or compounds in a character writing system" and "Can write most types of correspondence, such as memos, as well as social and business letters, and short research papers and statements of position in areas of special interest or in special fields." Although these guidelines can be somewhat useful for teachers and testers, it is not immediately clear how one might go about sampling writing behavior for assessment, particularly in a limited amount of time. In other words, what should serve as the writing task or prompt?

Weigle (2002) and Hamp-Lyons (2003) describe some of the variables that one needs to consider when constructing a writing prompt. Among them are topic, genre, number of tasks, whether or not students have a choice of prompts and format. The choice of prompt is tied directly to a test's validity. To use the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) as an example, the exam used to include a prompt that asked a general question, such as, "Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? Always telling the truth is the most important consideration in any relationship between people. Use specific reasons and examples to support your answer" (www.ets.org). The student had 30 minutes to answer the question. The new internet-based TOEFL includes the same type of general question, called an independent task, as well as an integrated writing task that requires students to read a short passage, listen to a related lecture, and then write a 20-minute essay relating the two. There is a wide variety of ways to determine the validity of such a writing test. One important consideration is content validity, the extent to which such writing tasks are representative of real tasks in the context that students are taking the test to enter, in this case, North American universities. For the new TOEFL, Cumming et al. (2004) interviewed experienced university ESL teachers as a means of assessing the tasks and determining ways to improve them. Determining task authenticity can, of course, encompass many more steps, however, as described by Wu and Stansfield (2001).

Single-item tests, such as the TOEFL independent tasks, have a variety of problems, as discussed in Weigle (2004), and the addition of a task in which students respond to some written or aural source text, such as the TOEFL, has been seen by many as a positive addition because it is more similar to actual university writing tasks (Cumming et al., 2000; Weigle, 2004). Weigle (2004) examined the implementation of an integrated university reading and writing ESL test and found it to be superior in terms of both reliability and validity to a test that simply had students respond to short prompts. Furthermore, the integrated test had the advantage of positive washback in the ESL classes. Cumming et al. (2005) found that the independent and integrated prompts did elicit writing that differed significantly on a variety of measures, the implication being that to assess students' writing, a variety of tasks, including those that integrate other skills, are necessary. In creating any writing prompt, it is essential to keep in mind the context for which one is eliciting written language samples. In the case of the TOEFL, there is the problem of coming up with one test to assess language proficiency for both undergraduate and graduate students in a wide range of academic fields. In the case of foreign language assessment in the US, the Educational Testing Service, in their Advanced Placement tests, has thus far maintained its use of a single-item prompt (www.ets.org), perhaps because the goals of the students taking the test are less clear.

The second major issue in large-scale testing is the grading of the texts produced by the prompts. A variety of scales or rubrics exist, both holistic and analytic, and primary and multitrait. Over the years, the advantages and disadvantages of each type regarding reliability, validity, practicality, and authenticity, have been debated (e.g., Cohen, 1994; Weigle, 2004), and the scale must certainly

be appropriate to the context. Recently, attention has also been directed to the characteristics and training of the raters themselves. Weigle (1994, 1998) studied how experience affected raters' scores both before and after training, as well the interaction of experience, training, and prompt. Shi (2001) studied native and non-native EFL teachers' ratings of Chinese students' essays using a holistic scale, and found that although there were no significant quantitative differences in the scores, written comments revealed the Chinese teachers and the native English-speaking teachers were attending to different criteria. Lumley (2002) found that although a set of experienced raters were giving similar scores, they were placing different emphases on different components of the scale they were using, echoing the concerns of others who have claimed that rater training may lead to reliability at the expense of validity (Huot, 1993).

Classroom assessment and portfolios

Classroom teachers need to assess writing to assign grades by measuring student achievement, and to give feedback. Certainly, teachers want to assess writing in a way that is reliable and valid, just as in large-scale testing, but there are also concerns about providing students with feedback on their writing, something that is minimally a concern on most large-scale tests. To this end, it is unlikely that a classroom teacher would assign a holistic score, such as the one used for the TOEFL, because analytic scales generally provide learners with more information about where their strengths and weaknesses lie. Weigle (2004) provides an excellent summary of the relationship between concerns related to large-scale testing and classroom testing.

With regard to how teachers actually assess writing, little research has been conducted. One notable exception is Cumming (2001), who interviewed 48 experienced ESL and EFL teachers about their assessment practices. Although he expected to find differences in second and foreign language contexts, he did not. What he found were differences related to teaching writing for general versus specific purposes. For example, in specific-purpose courses, teachers defined their own standards, based on the syllabus and focused on a limited range of criteria. In the general purposes courses, teachers had a wide variety of ways to assess writing, focusing on a wide variety of goals.

Brindley (2001) reviewed research on teacher-constructed assessment tasks as a way to assess competencies outlined in the Australian Adult Migrant English Program. He stated that the tasks varied widely (Wigglesworth, 2002, as cited in Brindley), and in the case of writing, although teachers agreed on overall competency attainment, they did not agree as much on specific criteria (Smith, 2000, as cited in Brindley). He suggested that because of the time-consuming nature of developing assessment tasks, teachers should be given a task bank containing piloted tasks to ensure greater comparability across classrooms in which teachers are expected to assess their students' writing in relation to a set of outcomes. Arkoudis and O'Loughlin (2004) further explored the problems of teachers implementing top-down standards in an Australian context. In a qualitative study,

they explored the teachers' perspectives and revealed the contradictions of using one particular outcomes-based assessment framework in the classroom.

Self-assessment may be used by classroom teachers as a way to make learners more aware of their strengths and weaknesses. As in peer review, learners can be given questions to answer or rubrics to evaluate their own writing. They can also be given guidelines and techniques for assessing their writing process (Brown, 2005; Sullivan & Lindgren, 2002). Luoma and Tarnanen (2003) reported on the construction of a self-assessment instrument for writers learning Finnish as a second language. The instrument was based on the DIALANG project (www.dialang.org) in which learners could assess their language skills in relation to the Common European Framework. Luoma and Tarnanen had students compare their writing to benchmark texts and assess their own work. The learners found the instrument to be helpful, but not to be a complete replacement for teacher feedback. Self-assessment is not intended to replace other means of assessment. Instead, as Luoma and Tarnanen stated (p. 461), "What self-rating systems can do is to provide another means for learners to practice writing and self-reflection."

Over the last 15 years, much has been written about the use of alternative forms of L2 assessment. Portfolios, which include some form of self-assessment, have been praised for their construct validity and authenticity. Concerns have been raised, however, about their lack of reliability and impracticality (e.g., Weigle, 2002). Empirical studies are necessary to determine how they can best be implemented. Hirvela and Sweetland (2005) completed a case study of two ESL writers in classes that required them to develop portfolios. By following the two students, they showed how they responded to the requirements and what they did and did not understand about the portfolio's purpose. Kraemer (2005) described in detail her implementation of the portfolio component of a German FL class at a US university. She gathered students' opinions on the procedure and found that they considred the portfolios an effective teaching tool, as well as a preferable form of assessment. Although portfolios are more commonly used in the class, they can be used at the program level, as well. Song and August (2002) described the use of portfolios as an alternative to traditional testing for an ESL exit test. They found that the portfolio system was preferable because it successfully identified students who proceeded to do well in the subsequent English composition course, but who had failed a traditional exam.

The effects of technology on assessment

Technology is changing the logistics of assessment. With regard to writing, students often type their essays instead of handwriting, and this has led researchers to examine how computers can affect the assessment of students' writing. Li (2006) studied ESL writers completing two comparable essays by hand and on a word processor. The students revised more and paid more attention to higher-order thinking skills while using the computer. However, although there were no significant differences on a variety of traits, including communicative quality,

organization, and linguistic accuracy and appropriateness, the computer-written essays were better in terms of argumentation, presumably because of the ease of making higher-level revisions. Wolfe and Manalo (2004) also studied essays written by hand and on a word processor, but in their studies, students chose which medium to use. Controlling for demographic variables, they found that lower-proficiency students did slightly better on handwritten essays, whereas higher-proficiency students did not perform differently under the two conditions.

Wolfe and Manolo did not control for the medium in which raters graded the essays, meaning that they could have been influenced by how the content of the essay was presented, but they state that previous research suggests that such a problem is minimal. H. K. Lee (2004) did examine raters' scores on handwritten, researcher-transcribed typed essays, and student-written typed essays. He found that reliability was higher on the transcribed and typed essays when the raters used a holistic scale, probably because holistic scales assess overall judgment. Like Li, he looked at the quality of the essays in a repeated measures design, and found no differences with regard to holistic scores, but significantly higher scores on the typed essays when an analytic scale was used.

Ethics in L2 writing assessment

Discussions of ethical issues related to L2 assessment have increased in the literature within the last 10 years (e.g., Hamp-Lyons, 1997; Kunnan, 2000; Shohamy, 1997). Cumming (2002) points out that these issues are particularly acute in the assessment of writing because it often involves expressing personal views, resulting in a form for others to evaluate. One could argue that any study addressing the reliability and validity of writing assessment involves ethical concerns. If an assessment measure is not reliable and valid, it cannot be ethical. Furthermore, studies of how tests are used, including Weigle (2004), and Braine (2001), who studied problems with the implementation of an exit writing exam, deal with ethical issues related to the use of tests. The ethics of a test cannot be determined in a vacuum, only in relationship to its use, and a test that is ethical in one context may not be ethical in another. For example, Cumming (2002) discusses ethical dilemmas in the assessment of writing in high-stakes large-scale testing. He explains that tests often become a unique writing context, and that context "must on one hand represent the constructs to be assessed but on the other hand not be biased for or against any particular population or sub-population" (p. 80). High-stakes tests need to be consistent, thus making it difficult to use alternative forms of assessment, where many variables cannot be controlled. Furthermore, what they test needs to be clearly explained to potential test-takers.

One final important consideration in settings where English is not a mother tongue is the model of English on which assessment should be based. Of course, this issue is not limited to writing, and in fact, of all of the areas of instruction and assessment, writing is probably the least permeable to local variation. Nevertheless, some scholars have questioned the hegemony of dominant native-speaker models both inside and outside North America (Canagarajah, 2006; Horner &

Trimbur, 2002; Jenkins, 2006; Kubota, 2001), and some have urged that testing institutions reexamine the ways in which their instruments (e.g., TOEFL, TOEIC, IELTS) serve the entire international community (Brown, 2004; Davies, Hamp-Lyons, & Kemp, 2003; Hamp-Lyons & Zhang, 2001; Lowenberg, 2002).

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