CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This chapter reviews research on the use of models in writing instruction, the integration of language skills and grammar in writing as well as the current status of writing approach. While this study deals with the sentence modelling approach, there is a paucity of research in this area of study especially among low proficiency students.

The Use of Models in Writing Instruction

The use of models in writing is widespread among ESL learners and it is based on the notion that students' work must be based on "internalized knowledge of accepted lexical, grammatical, organizational and graphic conventions" (Watson, 1982; p. 8). In addition, the study of examples of good writing reinforces learners' understanding of how good writing is actually shaped.

Researchers who promote the use of models in writing instruction argue that substitution and analysis tasks give students valuable insights into how the models are constructed and how such tasks build confidence and fluency. Among those who support modelling is Watson (1982) who maintains that "models provide exposure to the lexical items, structural patterns and conventions of the target language at all levels of discourse" (p. 6) and these models are said to provide the powerful input to ESL learners. He suggested that the use of models in the classroom can be categorized in at least two ways: instruction by *focus* and by *emphasis*. In the *focus* category, the student is asked to focus on structural points, rhetorical organization or its communicative function in the model. In the *emphasis* category, the comprehension

and analysis of the model, or the student's own production of texts is emphasized. He contends that the use of models in these two categories is useful for directing the students' attention to features on various levels of dicourse.

Models have also been used to reinforce the notion of teaching grammar in the context of writing. In this respect, the model is treated as "a source of patterns to be reproduced or manipulated in various ways" (Watson, 1982). Grammar based models and exercises may include manipulation of the patterns learnt, and students who, in turn, are expected to produce parallel and similar error-free sentences.

In addition, those who support modelling also assert that style can also be improved through the modification of classical imitation execises (Corbett, 1965, 1971 cited in Stolarek, 1994). Students can actually follow the model in overall organization and syntactic patterning of a more superior composition and thus become more aware of the possibilities for generalizing the syntactic and rhetorical features of the model. These models, too are able to acquaint students with complicated structural conventions and patterns they have not previously used in their writing, thus enhancing creativity (McCampbell, 1966 cited in Storalek, 1994). This creative imitation further enhances originality in student writing by providing the students with stylistic options.

Further studies by May (1980) and Myers (1978) counter the objections of the model-based approach (cited in Noyce & Christie, 1983). They have investigated the relationship between sentence modelling and writing for younger children. The findings in both studies stress the importance of oral and written practice in creating sentences similar to model sentence patterns. This approach is based on the assumption that children can be introduced through imitation to syntactic structures they are unable to generate on their own. Other research by Cramer & Cramer, 1975 and Odegaard &

May, 1972 have also found a positive association between sentence modelling and improvement in the writing of second- and third-grade children.

However, there are a number of critics to this model-based composition teaching. Many researchers and instructors are critical of the use of models that merely call for such an imitation. Among them are Slager (1975) and Storalek (1994) who admit that compositions derived from models do not allow for originality and in fact may produce writing that is stilted. Rivers and Tempeley (1978) say that there is a high risk of boredom in using models (cited in Watson, 1982).

Other objections to the use of such manipulative exercises in models are based on the argument that the communicative purpose of writing is ignored. There is a risk of producing discourse by merely manipulating structures. Dykstra (1973), a critic of this model-based approach, points out that the model is the "product of other people's writing, not the learner's own product and it is the product-not the process of writing that is observed" (cited in Watson, 1982; p. 6). These critics posit that since the product and process are different, then how can the analysis of products contribute to the process of writing. Other critics include Zamel (1982) who advocated that "the models-based approach contradict recent findings that writing is a process of discovering meaning vis-a-vis the use of thinking skills".

The model-based approach, as Pica (1986, p. 7) argues, also overlooks the basic fact that learners are language learners, and that the skills for manipulating grammatical markers, organising paragraphs and other relevant skills cannot be learned at once. These skills, she says, must be developed slowly through the "learner's active testing of hypotheses about the rules and patterns in the new language function to communicate meaning" (Chelliah, 1993). Other critics include Eschholz (1980) who

opposes the model-based approach because the emphasis is more on reading comprehension and rhetorical analysis instead of the actual writing task. Consequently, the imitation of models is, thus seen as "stultifying and inhibiting writers rather than empowering or liberating them" (Watson,1982; p. 11).

Despite these critics, many argue that there is still a place for the use of models in the writing class, especially in ESL and EFL situations. Many reseachers encourage the use of models as they presumably believe that "only models can contribute to students' own participation in the writing process by providing both resource and support, both stimulus and guidance, both experiences (linguistic, rhetorical, cultural) and reassurance" (Watson, 1982). Others use the model as a kind cue to writing (Raimes, 1978; Hillocks, 1984). They believe that models can be useful when fully integrated into the sequence of activities within the writing lesson.

Clearly, models can still contribute significantly to the teaching of composition especially in ESL and EFL situations and should not be abandoned totally. It should be integrated with the process-oriented approach and this essentially has indeed given the use of models in writing instruction a new frontier. The use of such models should also be integrated with other skills, such as reading, speaking and listening in the hope that there would be better shared discoveries and reactions to stimulate individual involvement and thinking which will produce alternative to result in genuine composition. Rapid progress in students' writing performance can be expected well before they reach advanced proficiency levels in a writing programme with sentence modelling practice. Their writing will be organized and they will readily see applications for new grammatical knowledge in their writing.

Integration of Language Skills and Grammar in Writing Instruction

A body of evidence has accumulated over the past decade in support of integrating language skills and grammar in writing instruction. Studies suggest that these language skills and writing are interrelated. By integrating reading, listening and speaking through sentence modelling, it will increase both the syntactic maturity and overall quality in the writing of ESL learners. Such tasks can develop the grammatical knowledge necessary for writing while they are communicating because by manipulating meaningful context, learners' attention can be drawn to problematic grammatical features.

Research has indicated that oral language exercises help children acquire the syntactic patterns of standard English as evidenced in Ikeguchi's study (1997). Ikeguchi reports that integrated writing lessons with speaking, reading, and listening are able to produce a dynamic writing output. Her Japanese college students were able to organize and express these ideas in complete sentences after some exposure to structural elements and style of writing through some reading, speaking and listening activities. By combining the teaching of writing with other skills, it allows students freedom to express themselves meaningfully.

Sysoyev (1999), another proponent of integrative grammar teaching clarifies that "communication cannot take place in the absence of structure or grammar". In addition, Musumeci (1997) points out that "students should be able to learn explicit grammar rules as well as have a chance to practice them in communication in the authentic or stimulation tasks" (cited in Sysoyev, 1999). She also advocates giving students a chance to look at the language on a sentence level to see how certain grammatical rules are applied. Thus, the integrative approach which presupposes

students' interaction while learning, can be viewed as a cognitive process of learning in L2.

Further research by Miller and Ney (1968) suggests that writing exercises designed to supplement oral drills on specific syntactic structures promote writing (cited in Stotsky, 1975). Miller and Ney compared the performance of two randomly matched fourth-grade classes. The control class had regular lessons in reading and composition, while the experimental class had, in addition, one year of regular oral practice in manipulating syntactic structures. Students were asked to read two cue sentences from the blackboard. The teacher then combined these sentences and the students performed choral reading of this new sentence. Later, the students were given writing practice after hearing cue sentences read aloud. There were 39 lessons on relative clauses, 31 lessons on shifting adverbial clauses and 17 lessons on nominalizations. The results indicated that the experimental group of 26 students gained significantly over controls in the use of the practiced structures. The results confirmed the results of other researchers on the relationship between these language skills and writing.

The increasing number of studies which show a relationship between these language skills and writing provide useful insights which can be used by learners and planners to revise discourse. Other studies that support this contention include research by Lightbown and Spada (1990) and White et al. (1991) who suggest that such indirect grammar instruction can lead to improved mastery of language features and subsequently improvement in writing. In the first study by Lightbown and Spada, it was determined that learners in various communicative classrooms showed greater accuracy in subsequent use of the form than learners from classrooms where there was

no focus on form or correction of errors. The other two studies required teachers in different communicative classrooms to present formal instruction and feedback on two grammatical points. Based on the positive outcome of the research, these researchers suggest that learners can develop knowledge about grammatical features and subsequently become more aware of the feature in communicative output afterwards, a process seen as essential for language acquisition (cited in Fotos, 1994).

Similar observations were made by Calkins (1980) who found that third graders learned punctuation much better in the context of writing and publishing than by studying punctuation rules in isolation. This is further supported by DiStefano and Killion's (1984) experimental study at grades four through six which showed that students who were taught the conventions of language in the context of their writing generally made better use of writing mechanics than did students who had studied these skills in isolation (cited in Weaver, 1996).

Research by Weaver (1996) also reinforces the view that teaching grammar in the context of writing works better than teaching grammar as a formal system. She insisted that basic grammatical concepts need to be taught aside from the writing process itself. In her grammar lessons, students are guided to notice grammatical patterns through examples of grammatically complete sentences and taught grammatical points in the process of conferencing with students. They then derive generalizations themselves. She also discovered that grammar terminology can be dispensed of and thus students are not fully aware they are being taught grammar.

However, she cautioned that teaching grammar in the context of writing will not automatically mean that once taught, the concepts will be learned and applied ever after. On the contrary, grammatical concepts must be taught and re-taught, and

students may long afterwards continue to need guidance in actually applying what they have, in some sense or to some degree, already learned because the learning of grammatical concepts is so complex. Weaver (1979, p. 88-89) further claimed that formal instruction in grammar may have a harmful effect and eventually has little transfer to writing situations. Partly, it tends to alienate students, and partly because it takes time that might profitably be used in helping students read, listen and speak more effectively.

In addition, Harris and Rowan (1989) in their study of college students' concept of sentence, found that many students were confused by the meaning-based definitions of sentence that they had been taught. They pointed out that "practice, practice, and more practice usually does not promote adequate understanding". This is because the practice exercises in grammar books are carefully crafted to be relatively easy; they do not give students the opportunity to grasp the critical features of a concept like *sentence*.

Further support is found in the Martin (1968) and Crews' (1971) studies which examined the effects of a linguistically-oriented grammar approach upon children's writing skills in composition with a *traditional* language program in the control classes (cited in Stotsky, 1975). Both studies utilized writing practice manipulating syntactic structures as part of their programs.

Martin's year-long program sought to develop sentence-writing skills in grades 3, 4 and 5, using three control and experimental classes at each grade level. His materials consisted of the linguistically oriented *Roberts English Series*, some self-designed inductive sentence-building exercises. Post-writing samples were analyzed in

terms of mean T-unit length and the subordination ratio. Data results significantly favoured the experimental classes at all grade levels.

Crew's year-long program sought to develop selected skills in writing in grade 4, using five experimental and five control classes. The experimental groups utilized materials in two books by Allen et al. 1967, entitled *A Linguistic Approach to Writing: Discovery 1 and Discovery 2* and supplementary exercises. The structures taught were: (a) shiftable adverbials, e.g., *last week*, (b) prepositional phrases, (c) phrase clusters, e.g., *on the table in the hall*, (d) middle adverbs, (e) simple connectors such as *and. but, so*, or *or*, (f) participal modifying phrases, and (g) subordinate clauses. At the end of the year, the experimental group showed a significantly greater variety in structure over the controls at the .001 level. Crew demonstrated that selected skills need to be developed in order to see an improvement in writing.

It can be concluded that indirect grammar instruction carried out integratively with other language skills is most likely needed for writing improvement. The above studies point to the need for teachers to teach grammar through consciousness-raising tasks to enable the students have a grasp of rules of grammar and writing because grammatical accuracy is important as it marks a second language learner as competent. Teachers need to understand that there must be a minimal amount of grammatical knowledge to enable them to proceed with writing. Hence, the challenge for language teachers is to develop effective ways of focusing learner's attention on linguistic rules minus the terminology.

Current Status of Writing Approach

Recent studies of L1 and L2 writing instruction seem to indicate that a hybrid of process/product approach is suitable. Incidentally, there were several voices of

protest for process as well as product approach in the L2 community. Critics of process approaches such as Delpit, Gee, Kutz and Roskelly repeatedly focus on the difficulties of implicit instruction rather than explicit instruction such as modelling (cited in Collins, 1995). Horowitz (1986) also criticised the process writing that tends to be codified and over-simplified and finally the writing process is reduced to the use of unsystematic, open-ended writing instruction. Reyes (1992) further claims that teachers who implement the process approach without modifications have "lost sight of the fact that mere implementation of these programs does not translate into authentic, natural or holistic experiences for non-mainstream students" (cited in Montague, 1995). Hillocks (1986) who also challenged pure *process* as an effective mode of writing instruction, suggested the *product* approach which includes analysis of models are effective in improving writing quality.

Nevertheless, criticisms have also been hurled at the product approaches. For example, research by Lederfein (1992) on prescriptive product methodologies has been criticized for being simplistic. Another critic, Cumming, (1989) posits that "instructional approaches that prompt students to focus on single aspects of their writing such as syntactic errors may have the disadvantage of directing learners' attention away from considerations of the complexity of their composing".

Thus the pendulum in L2 composition theory has swung from *process* but not backwards to the traditional rhetorical *product*; rather, writing instruction that merges process and product. Process-product orientations, instead of being regarded as mutually exclusive, should probably be seen as drawing from different sources:

one from idea exploration and the exploitation of students' own cognitive resources, the other from an exploration of how other writers have solved

meaning problems and from a recognition that different cultures have evolved

different ways of solving those problems.   (Leki, 1991; p. 136-7)

Connor (1987) maintains that text analysis of written products complements process-centered research and is needed for an integrated theory of writing. In short, both approaches- sentence based and process centered have been distinguished among empirical studies of writing and are necessary for a comprehensive theory of writing.

Raimes (1985), likewise, has indicated that the less proficient writers need more opportunity to talk, listen, read and write in order to marshal the vocabulary they need to make their own background knowledge accessible to them in their L2; more instruction and practice in generating, organizing and revising ideas; more attention to the rhetorical options available to them and more emphasis on editing for linguistic form and style (p. 250). Thus, Raimes (1985) recommends that we

consider the need to attend to product as well as process. Our students should be taught not only heuristic devices to focus on meaning but also heuristic devices to focus on rhetorical and linguistic features after the ideas have found some form. Hence, a process/product approach to writing instruction is recommended to EFL/ESL students.   (p. 247-8)

Rodrigues, (1985), another proponent for this pluralization of the writing approaches, argues that students need "clearly structured skills training" (p. 26). Therefore, the synergic relationship between process and product approach allows one to pay attention to the ways that the immature and unprofessional writer writes: one who needs models to practice to improve her linguistic and mechanical skills and who still needs time to think through the ideas and to revise them.

Generally, it may be correct to say that there is no "best" method that exists (Prabhu, 1990). Prabhu contends that "the search for an inherently best method should perhaps give way to a search for ways in which teachers' and specialists' pedagogic perceptions can most widely interact with one another" (p. 176). Modelling tells us that there are additional ways to teach writing besides the process approach. "Because good teachers usually use aspects of each approach, no one approach can claim to be the only way to teach writing- or the only way to diagnose problems in students' writing" (Rodrigues, 1985). Thus, we should continue to teach process approaches but integrated into these approaches should be other techniques such as models.

Thus, the conclusion one can draw from past research mentioned above is that, the process approach may work for L1 students based on the assumption that these students have the basic knowledge of some grammatical rules of grammar and writing but it may not work for very low proficiency L2 students. These students need some form of structured skills training such as models to practice grammar, spelling and punctuation. Therefore, current research should look into the possibilities of a hybrid of process/product approach with focus on indirect grammar instruction.