

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter reviews the literature on the use of models in the teaching of writing to non-native speakers of English. It begins with a discussion on the disillusionment that has set in with the process approach and the ongoing feud between the 'process' and the 'product'. A description of the role of models and its effects in the ESL writing class ensues. The final part of this chapter examines the reading-writing connection and its integration into ESL writing instruction.

Critique of the Process Approach

The emergence of the process approach in ESL composition seemed to have been motivated by a dissatisfaction with the earlier writing approaches, namely the controlled composition and traditional rhetorical approaches which focused mainly on form and which were claimed to have disrupted the passage of original, creative thinking and writing. Raimes (1991) established that researchers, influenced by L1 writing research on composing processes reacted against these form-dominated approaches and focused instead on what L2 writers actually do as they write (Emig, 1971). The attention to the writer as language learner and creator of text has led to a "process approach," with a new range of classroom tasks, such as, the use of journals (Spack & Sadow, 1983), invention (Spack, 1984), peer collaboration (Long & Porter, 1985), revision (Hall, 1990), and attention to content before form (Zamel, 1976, 1983). In essence, "the communication of

ideas becomes primary, and the rest is truly peripheral" (Raimes, 1983:259). Writing is, according to Taylor (1981:5-6), no longer the "straightforward plan-outline-write process" but rather a "non-linear, exploratory, and generative process whereby writers discover and reformulate their ideas as they attempt to approximate meaning" (Zamel, 1983:165).

The process approach is, of course, not without its critics. Reid (1984) suggested that the approach neglects to seriously consider variations in writing processes due to differences in individuals, writing tasks, and situations; language proficiency; level of cognitive development; and differences between writing in a first and second language. Horowitz (1986a:144) claimed that the approach fails to prepare students for essay examination writing or highly structured assignments, that it "creates a classroom situation that bears little resemblance to the situation in which (students' writing) skills will eventually be exercised". "Let the writer write" (Rodrigues, 1985:24) became the motto of many a writing-process oriented teacher who, not only stopped teaching language usage altogether but also refused to teach punctuation, capitalization and spelling as well. At their worst, according to Rodrigues (1985: 25), these writing process converts accepted the process at its most shallow level and believed that all they had to do was encourage students to write and they would automatically improve. The writing process was no longer the be-all-and-end-all of composition theory and practice. Myers and Gray (1984), tell us that there are additional ways to teach writing besides the process approach, and that "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".

Because of these numerous dissenting voices, writing teachers were left in an unfortunate plight - do they throw out teaching writing as a process or do they go back to the basics? The newest revelations, according to Rodrigues (1985:26), urge us not to go backward - "that would undo all we have learned so far" - but to "temper the freewheeling writing process with some structure, some purpose, and some recognition that students need experiences with a wide variety of writing tasks, and, when appropriate, some clearly structured skills training". In essence, research calls for pluralization of the writing curriculum, one which integrates other techniques, such as models and simulations, into the process approach to writing. According to Rodrigues, alongside their need for time to think through their ideas, to revise them, and to write for real audiences and real purposes, students also need structure; they need models to practice, and they need to improve even mechanical skills.

The Models Approach

A model, according to Master (1997:30), is a sample of writing that is used for pedagogical purposes. Modeling refers to that ancient practice of observing and replicating the writing of others as a means of internalizing a sense of written language, and there seems, as Gorrell (1987:53) noted, to be a resurgence of interest in this practice in the ESL writing classroom as of late. Defined by Stolarek (1994:154), modeling is an act of determining the defining characteristics of a model text, that is a text which is seen as being exemplary of its kind, and developing methods of duplicating these defining characteristics using different content.

Although the use of model passages has been widespread in ESL writing texts, its use in the teaching of writing to non-native speakers of English, however, has been somewhat controversial. The argument, as noted by Master (1997:30), mainly revolves around the perception of what constitutes a good model and how it should be exploited in the classroom. Despite some dissenting voices, many rhetoric and composition theorists have advocated the use of imitation of models as a valid pedagogical method.

Benefits of the Models Approach

"Learning by heart the 300 poems from the Tang Dynasty, you can compose poetry even if you are not a poet" is a Chinese saying, according to Luo Yiyun (1989:26), on the function of imitation. According to Gorrell (1987), many teachers using imitation in their classrooms have found it to be effective in teaching form and sense of language while encouraging rather than stifling creativity, regardless of whether the approach is process-oriented, cognitive-based, rhetorical, or a combination of these. For as surely as painters imitate other painters, violinists imitate other violinists, golfers imitate other golfers, imitation, according to Gorrell, is one of the ways beginners learn how it's done. It offers a way for unskilled writers to learn how to shape their sentences, develop their paragraphs, express their own voices, and perform many of the complicated tasks that the writing process involves. "It is in fact part of the writing process" (p. 56)

Instructors who use imitation to teach writing report that skills acquired through imitative practice transfer to other writing on the level of sentences, paragraphs, and essays. Corbett (1971) asserted that style can be improved through modification of classical imitation exercises, while McCampbell (1966) contended that models acquaint

students with complicated structural conventions and patterns they have not previously used in their writing, thus enhancing creativity. Gibson (1967) sees benefits to style and voice, while Purves and Purves (1986) consider knowledge of models one of three forms of knowledge (the other two being semantic and pragmatic knowledge) imperative in learning how to write within the context of a particular culture. Gray (1983:185) developed an approach for teaching the cumulative sentence by using what he calls "the simple yet powerful idea that we could teach students to write by examining how real writers write" and observed that "students apply these now-familiar structures by writing longer, extended sequences" (p. 186). Brooks (1983:216) recorded a distinct improvement in style in her students' writing after having used a passage of prose to guide her class to an awareness of its stylistic and syntactic features. She observed that "the structure of the paraphrase, rather than limiting student imagination, provides the crutch that makes it possible for him to give his imagination free rein, without the worry about how to finish a sentence he has once started . . . almost inevitably the next formal essay he writes will contain some turn of phrase, some sentence structure that he has 'learned' from his model".

Williams (1979), having done one of the few empirical studies on imitation and writing, observed that:

[In] an analysis of flaw counts among this most competent group,...evaluators found fewer flaws in logic/ organization and style among the imitators. This result supports our original thesis: When students are provided with model structures to impose on experience of their own devising, they will be better able to impose similar structures on self-generated content during real writing tasks (p. 37)

Both Paulston (1972:38) and Cramer & Cramer (1975:1012) established that using techniques of modeling provides students with the motivation for continued writing. Patterned writing gives the students plenty of practice in writing correct forms, rather than practicing the incorrect forms, protecting them from a hit-and-miss activity as well as from a multiple of errors, and allowing them to work within the limits of their proficiency and at their own pace of progress. Immediate, observable writing success occurs, giving the students a sense that their efforts have been rewarded. In Paulston's (1972:38) own words, "children are in fact willing enough to write, or indeed do anything else we ask of them, provided they have a reasonable chance of success in what they are doing".

Stolarek's (1994:154) study examined the differences in response between expert and novice writers who were asked to write essays in an unfamiliar prose form after having been given different sets of instruction. She found that novice writers who are given a model of an unfamiliar prose form to imitate respond in a manner which is more introspective and evaluative and far more similar to the responses of expert writers than do novice writers who are not given a model. In other words, those who engaged in prose modeling the most, that is, those who most consciously modeled their work on the characteristics of the provided model, were also the most likely to engage in metacognitive thought during their writing, and were most successful in completing the study.

Charney & Carlson (1995) maintained that model texts are a rich source that may prove useful to writers in different ways at different stages of their development. For student writers, models may be effective tools for learning the more enduring

conventional forms or for understanding those that apply most broadly across the discipline. At a later stage, models may provide valuable clues to the status of knowledge in the field. It seems likely that early experience in evaluating and drawing from models will be of lasting value.

Controversies of the Models Approach

Many teachers have reservations about using imitation and modeling for teaching writing. The use of models in writing has often been discredited, by rhetoric and composition theorists, as being responsible for causing a potentially inhibiting effect on the writer. Silva (1987) claimed that the approach was concerned primarily with formal accuracy and correctness, employing rigidly controlled programs of systematic habit formation designed to avoid errors. He maintained that the imitation and manipulation of model passages carefully constructed and graded for vocabulary and sentence patterns, preferred practice with previously learned discrete units of language rather than talk of original ideas, organization and style, hence resulting in writing that was stilted and lacking in originality and style.

This claim has been refuted by several researchers whose findings revealed that modeling, despite instructor concerns to the contrary, did not detract from the writer's ability to write in a creative manner. Stolarek's study (1994:154) on the effect of modeling on the development of metacognitive stance toward writing, found that one of the most original sample essays produced in her study was also the one which used very conscious, word-by-word modeling. Cramer & Cramer (1975:1014) maintained that each writer has an individual personality and that there is no way in which he or she can

remain a captive of another's style, that no one can constantly and continuously imitate the style of another individual - "the personality's demands for self-expression will out". They further reiterated that forms insure a greater likelihood for patterns, constructions, and story forms to be learned, and that writers benefit by receiving direct, concrete exposure to writing models with discernible language patterns and constructions. Master (1997:20) contended that the advantages of using models relate to the creativity they can potentially stimulate. According to him, models do not only provide exposure to conventions of the language, especially discourse, but also lexical items and structural patterns; they demonstrate many modes of rhetorical organization, communicative purpose, and anticipated audience; and they are windows on culture, revealing customs, values, assumptions, and attitudes toward the world. Rhetorical models focus attention on the way successful writers handle larger units of discourse. According to Watson (1982:8), if writing is stimulated by a model (e.g., from literature) such that the writing becomes a personal reaction and thus involves students' own feelings, then "alien product really has informed original process and the result is likely to be genuine composition".

Taylor (1976:317) contended that the use of models may underlie the common misconception that a writer has failed if he does not produce a polished essay on the first attempt and that revision is "punishment" for having failed. He argued that there is no guarantee that the necessary skills exemplified in a model will be transferred or that the student will be able to draw on the information when he actually needs it. According to Watson (1982:12), it is better to show students "where their own arguments are weak or where their logic breaks down" than to have them study models of someone else's writing. He also contended that models are product-oriented and therefore lead to

artificial products (texts). Gere (1987, cited in Gorrell, 1987), however, argued that originals exist to be imitated, and the very term "original" implies the possibility of imitations. Originals, she noted, are both models of how something can be done and challenges for improvement. Hence, imitation is not plagiarism, nor is it slavish attention to "how it's done".

Escholz (1984:24) protested that models are usually too long, too remote from students' own writing problems and too likely to promote reading comprehension and rhetorical analysis rather than writing, and that the imitation of models is "stultifying or inhibiting writers rather than empowering or liberating them". Corbett (1971:250), however, disputed the claim by stressing that the flexibility gained from internalizing models "unlocks our powers and sets us free to be creative, original, and ultimately effective" thus, helping to liberate rather than inhibit, empower rather than stultify.

Raimes (1983:126-127) claimed that models encouraged students to think that form comes first as a "predetermined mould (like a cake pan or a dessert mold) into which they pour their content", that it does not allow the writer "to discover the shape that best fits the ideas he wants to express for a particular purpose". Gorrell (1987:55) argued that form and meaning develop hand in hand, that attention to form is part of the process of generating and expressing ideas, informing and aiding writing at all stages. Attention to form aids invention, promotes the satisfaction of knowing how to put words down on paper, assists revision and editing.

Meade and Ellis (1970) and Braddock (1974) argued that some methods of paragraph development that are presented and taught do not exist in published expository writing while Watson (1982:7-8) criticized such constructed models as being

"depressingly artificial" and that they offer "false reassurance". On the contrary, D'Angelo (1973:283) stated the paradox that "imitation exists for the sake of variation. The student writer will become more original as he engages in creative imitation". Juxtaposing imitation and invention, he conceived of imitation as "the process whereby the writer participates not in stereotypes but in archetypal forms and ideas". Imitation is then viewed as a shortcut to learning new styles and structures, giving the learner a wider choice among alternatives for expressing individual ideas.

Model within the Process Approach

Watson (1982) put forward several pertinent questions regarding the Models Approach. "Models may provide powerful input, but what about intake?" (Krashen, 1978, cited in Watson, 1982:6) "How much of input can students actually take in, utilize and incorporate in their own work? (p. 6) "How can the teacher best use an *alien product* to strengthen the *original process* of student composition?" (p. 5) "How far can study and analysis of models strengthen students' understanding of how good writing is actually made, let alone help them to produce some for themselves?" (p. 6)

Dykstra (Paulston & Dykstra, 1973:ii, cited in Watson, 1982:6) pointed out that the model "is the product of other people's writing, not the student's own product, and it is the product - not the process - of writing that is observed." Hence, the writing teacher's plight, according to him, is how can he ensure transfer to the students' own writing the features of the model that are considered desirable? And, since product and process are two very different things, how can study and analysis of the former contribute to understanding of and participation in the latter?

Several suggestions were put forward to address the issue. Watson (1982:13) encouraged students to treat the model as a resource rather than the ideal, exploring it with the teacher and with each other and comparing it to their own products at various stages in their writing. He recommended presenting the model as one way, not the only way, to realizing a particular communicative purpose, which is "most useful when integrated into the sequence of activities within the writing lesson". Exploration and analysis of models, according to him, should involve students actively working together, in the expectation that shared discoveries and reactions will result in genuine composition. When models are used within the writing process in this way, students can easily perceive their purpose and utility. The student writers thus control the total process, including recourse to the model, because their own writing has quite clearly become the central concern of the lesson.

In order to understand how models could be utilized in the writing lesson, Escholz (1980) suggested that models should be provided *after* the student has made an initial attempt to write, not before. By deliberately placing the models at the end of a unit, the students could "focus first on communicative purposes and the linguistic and rhetorical features needed to realize this (Watson, 1982:12). Raimes (1983:127) suggested that the problems associated with the use of models might be avoided if the model is used not so much as a straitjacket but as a resource for possible ways of organizing information. "The model becomes not what he should do but only an example of what he could do". She suggested that comparing a model to what a writer has already generated allowed the student to say how the two are similar or different. Comparing two models, on the other hand, shows students the potential of different forms of organization.

Gorrell (1987) attested that one of the primary functions of imitation is its problem-solving capacity. It makes use of experience - one's own and that of others - to find solutions. Applied to writing, imitation means that we do not need to invent a new form every time we want to express an idea. "Trial-and-error writing depends too much on reinventing the wheel. Much more efficient is to ask: How has this problem been solved before?" (p. 55). Murray (1968, cited in Watson, 1982:12) and his colleagues developed courses in which models are used as problem-specific resources, that is, within the students' writing process, rather than outside it or initiating it. "Students must be permitted to discover their own writing problems" (1980:35), but once they have made that discovery, models may be very helpful, demonstrating solutions that others have found and that students can utilize for themselves.

The Reading-Writing Connection

Cobine (1995) attested that reading and writing exist only in relation to each other, that "writing is to reading as waking is to sleeping, as giving is to receiving". Squire (1983:581) contended that both comprehending and composing are basic reflections of the same cognitive process and that failure to teach composing and comprehending as process impedes our efforts not only to teach children to read and write, but efforts to teach them how to think. According to him, both composing and comprehending are critical to thought processes because the former actively engages the learner in constructing meaning, in developing ideas, in relating and expressing ideas while the latter requires the learner to reconstruct the structure and meaning of ideas expressed by another writer. To possess an idea that one is reading about, according to Squires,

requires competence in regenerating the idea, competence in learning how to write the ideas of another.

Many scholars have reported research findings that confirm a positive relationship between reading and writing (Aboderin, 1986:38). According to O'Dea (1965), those who read widely are rewarded in several ways, one of which is increased proficiency in writing, "most clearly seen in the areas of diction and sentence structure". Loban (1963, cited in Stotsky, 1983:628), who in his extensive investigation of the relationship between reading achievement and writing ability, found a high correlation between reading scores and ratings of writing quality, concluded that "those who read well also write well; those who read poorly also write poorly" (p. 75). DeVries (1970) found that students who did no composition work but were assigned additional reading surpassed the students who wrote the equivalent of two themes a week in all aspects of writing proficiency, as measured by an evaluation of pre- and post- expository writing samples on a composition rating scale. Mills (1974) found that children in Grade 4 who read or listened to and then discussed children's literature as a springboard to writing, scored significantly higher in their free writing than a control group that did not use children's literature in this manner. Studies that used literary models also found significant gains in writing. Andreach (1975, cited in Stotsky, 1983) who sought to develop organizational skills through the use of literary models found that experimental students wrote significantly better organized compositions than did control students.

Studies that sought to improve writing by providing reading experiences in place of grammar study or additional writing practice found that these experiences were as beneficial as, or more beneficial than, grammar study or extra writing practice. Elly,

Barham, Lamb and Wyllie (1976) found that the group of high school students who had additional reading instead of grammar study demonstrated competence in writing and related language skills fully equal to that shown by the grammar groups. Findings from Eckhoff's study (1983:608) found that children exposed to Basal A readers could write longer sentences, subordinate clauses and longer t-units, and more elaborate sentence structures than children exposed to the simpler Basal B readers with shorter sentences and t-units.

Many correlational studies, according to Stotsky (1983), show almost consistently that better writers tend to be better readers, that there is a significant relationship between reading comprehension and writing achievement in college freshmen as well as children in grade schools (D'Angelo, 1977; Grobe & Grobe, 1977; Bippus, 1977; Baden, 1981, cited in Stotsky, 1983). Stotsky (1983) also found that better writers tend to read more than poorer writers, and that better readers tend to produce more syntactically mature writing than poorer readers.

From both the correlational studies and experimental studies, it was found that reading experience seems to be a consistent correlate of, or influence on, writing ability. Thus, it is possible that reading experience may be as critical a factor in developing writing ability as writing instruction itself. These insights into the reading-writing connection indicate that more attention be directed towards improving the composing and comprehending processes. Squire (1983:587) asserted that since composing and comprehending have been recognized as interactive in relation to each other, teachers need to move away from an overt concern with discrete and often isolated sub-skills to a recognition of the importance of the interrelationship of skills within the total process.

Goodman & Goodman (1983:59) advocated that teachers should engage students in a large amount of varied reading and writing in order to develop a sense of control over these processes and find a personal significance for becoming literate. According to them, focusing on activities where reading and writing take place simultaneously will help students realize that one process supports the other and that development in reading and writing can only occur if they actively participate in reading and writing experiences which have significant and personal meaning for them.

Conclusion

Current literature is definitely seeing a shift in the overemphasis on process back to a legitimate concern for product. Master (1997:32) stated it rather pointedly that "the world wants products and does not particularly care how they were created". However, he reiterated that the problem ascribed to the use of models must be addressed so that they could be used in the most efficient way possible. Stolarek (1994:170) emphasized that pedagogical applications of modeling should be more "creative and generative" rather than "formulaic and doctrinaire", and that it is a challenge to writing instructors to select good models that are properly illustrative or accessible to students.

Connor (1987) maintained that both the process and product approaches are necessary for a comprehensive theory of writing and that thanks to the cooperative efforts in interdisciplinary work among rhetoricians, linguists, psychologists, and teachers, we can move toward an integrated theory of writing that includes both process and product.