

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Although this study investigates a course on teaching ESL writing, the research questions focus on changes taking place as five selected teachers attempt to appropriate innovations advocated by the lecturer of the course. I have therefore structured this review to first look at studies dealing with teacher change (some of which were used to provide the theoretical framework for the study, see p. 5). Then, following the structure of the course which was designed under four broad sections: language-focussed activities; genre-based approach; process writing and the treatment of errors, I have organised my review of literature to explore the theoretical underpinnings and recent controversies in these four areas. This is followed by a review of other related issues in ESL teacher education pertaining to the teaching of ESL writing.

Change and the Resistance to Change

The crux of the matter concerning teacher change is aptly explained in the following statement by Freeman (1992).

Knowledge transmission models, and the programs which implement them, assume that teachers' classroom practice can be directly shaped by other peoples' ideas. Until we realize just how serious and pervasive this fallacy is, and until we challenge it directly in our work with teachers, I do not see how we can make progress in providing effective teacher education. (p. 16)

Freeman (1989) points out that the first misconception is that language teacher education is generally concerned with the transmission of knowledge and the second

misconception is that transmission of knowledge will lead to effective practice. Freeman (1989) feels that the teacher educator whom he aptly calls “collaborator” should work to trigger the teacher’s awareness of what the teacher is doing. “By asking questions, by making observations in a detached way, by sharing personal teaching experience, the collaborator endeavors to start the teacher on a process of reflection, critique, and refinement of the teacher’s classroom practice” (p. 40). The point that is consistently stressed by researchers on teacher change is that bringing about actual change in the classroom is a long, difficult and complicated process.

Along these lines, Brock (1994) states, “Every teacher brings into the classroom attitudes which are shaped by experience, society and the educational context in which the teacher works” (p. 51). As such, Pennington (1995) says that change means “...challenging, ultimately deconstructing, and then reconstructing ingrained practice and long-held beliefs” (p. 705).

Bailey (1992) points out that one of the central themes arising in recent work on teacher education is the concept of “ownership”. By ownership she explains that teacher change does not involve modification of behaviour by externally imposed directions or requirements, but that it requires deliberation and analysis of ideas about teaching based on changed understandings. A sense of ownership is necessary for change to take effect. This point about ownership is also brought up by Kennedy (1987) in his explanation of the normative-re-educative concept of change, discussed under the theoretical framework of this study (see p. 8).

Bailey (1992) also explains “diffusion” as a term that is commonly used in innovation literature. Diffusion, she explains, “...refers to the communication of an

innovation, over time, among members of a social system. Diffusion involves both ordered and disordered personal and social activity” (p. 257). Markee (1993), Stoller (1994) and Rogers (1995) use the term “diffusion of innovations” in the titles of their studies to explain teacher change.

Bailey (1992) raises the question as to whether a change in attitude must precede a change in behaviour. Both Fullan (1991) and Markee (1997) stress that although we may expect teacher beliefs to change first before practice, empirical evidence indicates that beliefs may change as a result of experience. Trying new practices may lead to questioning one’s underlying beliefs.

Stoller (1994) points out, “An ELT innovation can be enthusiastically endorsed and implemented in some settings with little or no resistance, and harshly criticized and then strongly rejected in others” (p. 300). In order to encounter little resistance, Stoller (1994) suggests that an innovative idea must fall within a “zone of innovation” where there is moderate levels of complexity, compatibility, explicitness, visibility, flexibility and originality. “...their absence or excess can be detrimental to adoption rates because they can lead to unfavorable attitudes towards the innovation and subsequently undermine potential support” (p. 320). Along these lines, White (1993) states, “When it comes to judging an innovation, perceived compatibility with existing practices is usually cited as being important” (p. 249).

Similarly, Barkhuizan and Gough (1996) report that once teachers are familiar with a particular syllabus, they find it very difficult to change their teaching practice and their thinking about teaching. They hold on to what they know and to what they have been doing and therefore resist any attempt at change. In their study, they discovered that

teachers resisted new innovations because of "...large classes, poor resources and facilities and unfamiliarity with the approach" (p. 462). Murphy (1991) states that proposals for change do not mention how the changes might be evaluated and those who were implementing the ideas do not include an evaluation scheme as part of their curriculum design. He also warns of abandoning practice without properly assessing its worth. "This year's innovation rejects last year's doctrine" (Murphy, 1991, p. 27).

On the disruption of change and the resentment of its effects, Murphy (1991) suggests a bottom-up rather than a top-down innovation. In bottom-up innovation, the people most affected, the teachers, are involved in creating and promoting the innovation. Likewise, Nunan (1989), in his study of a collaborative approach to innovation, reports, "...it was clear that the great majority of teachers endorsed a bottom-up, school-based approach to curriculum renewal despite the fact that it made their job more complex and difficult" (p. 13). Pennington (1995b) concurs stating, "An approach constructed in a bottom-up manner will be one more adapted to new circumstances other than those in which and for which the original method was developed" (p. 721). However, Markee (1997) sounds a word of caution. He warns, "...one person's bottom-up management strategy may be perceived as another's top-down strategy" (p. 33). For this reason he states, "...language specialists need to have a basic understanding of what management is, because they are all involved in managing change to a greater or lesser extent" (p. 35).

A rather extreme example of resistance to change is well brought out by Shamim (1996) reporting about her attempt to move away from the teacher-centred methodology commonly found in classrooms in Pakistan.

Often, indirect ways were used to show frustration and unhappiness with the methodology being used. Hence, on at least one occasion during the term, all except two students decided to stay away from class. (These two students could not be informed by their friends, in time, about the boycott plan, I learnt later.)...often the majority of students came to the seminar without having done their assigned readings on the topic, and they did not hesitate to tell me so. In fact this was followed by requests for me to give a lecture instead. I found myself walking out of the class a couple of times in sheer frustration and anger. I often wondered if it would be better in the end to give in to their request for more lectures...Initially, when I gave group task, I tried to walk around to see if any help was required. The groups stopped talking as soon as I came too close...I gradually found myself assuming more and more authority in the classroom and this seemed to make the learners happy and relaxed. It was indeed ironic that the techniques I had been trying to use to create, supposedly, a non-threatening and relaxed atmosphere in the classroom had, in fact, become a potential source of tension and conflict...I also started wondering for how long I could take this personal 'wear and tear' and whether it was really worth the effort since the learners certainly seemed to prefer the traditional method of teaching and learning. (p. 108)

Shamin (1996), herself, provides an explanation when she discusses teacher training in Pakistan,

The dynamics of change are neither discussed nor are the potential barriers to change pointed out. This leaves the teachers unprepared to face the problems that follow their own efforts to implement change in the relative isolation of their own institutions and classroom. (p. 120)

Moreover, Widdowson (1993) states that new ideas do need to be mediated effectively and appropriately. Much has been said about adapting to the local situation but

Widdowson (1993) also provides the following cautionary note about existing traditions:

...taking local conditions into account in devising appropriate programmes is not the same as conceding to them as determinants of what can be done. There must always be the possibility of change, and that means that ideas from outside do have a legitimate role to play. Too much respect for existing tradition can easily be an excuse for inertia and the maintenance of a status quo which favors the powerful and privileged. (p. 271)

The following sub-sections discuss different schools of thought concerning the training of teachers.

The Need to Provide Immediate, Practical, Tangible Help

A study by Clark and Seward (1979) makes explicit that teacher trainers need to focus on specific techniques of presentation and to address theoretical issues only when they arise in discussions of those techniques. The dilemma that teacher trainers face in this situation is, how does one give the teacher trainees techniques they can use and the theoretical information required to make the most effective use of those techniques. Clark and Seward (1979) stress that getting down to the grass roots in the training of teachers means getting down to the detail of what they have to teach, but not necessarily to the detail of any underlying theory. A list of priorities for such a course is provided in the following order:

1. to provide students with a bag of tricks, a number of classroom techniques which they can use immediately.
2. to provide students with the ability to adapt materials from a variety of sources and to write their own materials.
3. to provide students with the opportunity to observe and analyse master teachers of ESL in a variety of classroom situations.
4. to provide students with the opportunity to practice a variety of techniques.
5. to provide students with sufficient theory to understand the implications of the choices they make. (Clarke and Seward, 1979, p. 253-254)

Similarly, Cott and Dubin (1979) state that teachers freely express their need for help, but feel it should be in the form of something they can put into their hands rather than into their heads. They want quick recipes for what to do tomorrow, in the form of hands on materials such as games or visuals. They evaluate a training programme in

terms of how much they can take back and use themselves or put into a learning centre for their students to use.

Cott and Dublin (1979) aim to make teacher trainers aware of the teachers' need for immediate, practical, tangible help in overcoming their sense of inadequacy. According to Cott and Dubin (1979), an understanding of what is appropriate for teachers is the trainers' real dilemma and challenge. Cott and Dubin (1979) explain,

Conscientious trainers believe that their ultimate goal should be to get trainees to the point of answering their own questions and making their own decisions. But they automatically assume that the first step, or lesson one, should be a lecture on the nature of language, followed by assigned reading and further lectures designed to provide in-depth background in the fields of second language acquisition, sociolinguistics, grammatical theory, and on issues of language pedagogy, cross-cultural awareness, and curriculum planning. Even when such courses begin with theory and promise to get to application later, the result can be alienation, hostility or no return audience next class or next term. (p. 36)

Cott and Dubin (1979) further stress that no matter how diverse the audience for such TESL programmes, there will always be some who want how-to-do-it formulas, while others will be looking for more general background and basic principles. They feel that both groups should be provided for. They conclude by stating that the best kind of training programme should provide a model itself. "The medium is the message" aptly applies to teacher training and the processes through which training takes place can be used as examples of how to teach the language.

An evaluative study of a TESL course conducted by Davis (1988) concluded that influence largely flowed in one direction. The course was training large numbers of teachers without systematic collection of feedback as to whether the training provided is appropriate or adequate. Proposals in this study by Davis (1988) called to increase the

time allocated to the observation of experienced teachers and more teaching practice. An interesting finding of the study was that although teacher-centred lecturing was criticised as being typical of unsatisfactory teacher-trainees, it was also found that an “excessive student-centred manner and an over-sympathetic attitude towards students’ linguistic errors led to a lax approach towards correction and poor classroom management” (Davis, 1988, p. 54).

In contrast to the above studies which focussed on the need to provide teachers with practical tools to use in the classroom, work done by Allwright (1983) and Gaies (1983) called for a description of total classroom processes to determine the characteristics of an effective lesson. Descriptions of total classroom processes would also help to determine the design of teacher training programmes. The studies of Allwright (1983) and Gaies (1983) are described in the next section on criticisms of the prescriptive approach.

Criticisms of the Prescriptive Approach to Teacher Change

Allwright (1983), in his article discussing the state of the art of classroom-centred research, states that small scale research at the level of technique is by no means ready to support a prescriptive approach to teacher change.

We do not yet have, and cannot expect to have in the foreseeable future, a situation where teacher trainers can, with the confidence born of a background of solid experimental results, tell their trainees what techniques to use and what not to use. (Allwright, 1983, p. 196)

He explains that the very high complexity of the teaching process makes it very difficult to talk in absolute terms about ‘bad’ and ‘good’ teaching devices. Language

teaching is much more complicated than that. He calls for retreating from prescriptive altogether in favour of adopting a descriptive approach, retreating from techniques to classroom processes. He explains that this means,

... trying to find ways of describing classroom processes to find out what actually happens in language classes, not assuming that all that happens is that a particular method or a particular set of techniques is simply implemented, but assuming that something below the level of technique, something less obviously pedagogic, takes place, something that is more likely to provide a fruitful subject for investigation. (Allwright, 1983, p. 196)

He further explains that researchers are now looking at the language lesson as a socially constructed event, as something that is the product of the interactive work of all the people present. Researchers have stopped looking at teaching as if everything of importance came from the teacher and have instead started looking at the way in which people interact in the classroom. Allwright (1983) concludes that the classroom is the crucible, the first place to look if we really want to understand how to help our teachers teach more effectively.

Gaies (1983) concurs with Allwright (1983) stating,

We have largely rejected the notion that classrooms differ simply along a single variable such as method. The failure of experimental research to demonstrate the clear-cut superiority of any one method has undoubtedly been a factor in this, as has been the sheer difficulty of conducting such research. Classroom process research rejects as simplistic any univariate classification of second language instructional experience. (p. 206)

Gaies (1983) explains that the emphasis of classroom process research is on describing as fully as possible the complexity of second language instructional environment, the key term being "description". Allwright (1983) and Gaies (1983) thus move away from the studies which call to focus on the practical, tangible needs of the teachers and stress

instead the need to look into the total processes that go on in the classroom, taking the focus away from the teacher.

The solution to these seemingly contradictory ways of bringing about teacher change lies possibly in the recent trend towards reflection and reflective teaching which is discussed in the next section.

The Reflective Approach to Teacher Change

The solution to all the earlier and at times contradictory suggestions on how to equip teachers with what they need to be effective and successful teachers seem to lie in a recent approach that seeks to gain a better understanding of teaching processes by exploring with teachers what they do and why they do it. A reflective approach to change, according to Richards and Lockhart (1994), is one in which “teachers and student teachers collect data about their teaching, examine their attitudes, beliefs, assumptions, and teaching practices, and use the information obtained as a basis for critical reflection about teaching” (p. 1). This approach is often teacher initiated and directed because it involves teachers observing themselves, collecting data about their own classrooms and their roles within them, and using that data as a basis for self-evaluation, for change and hence for professional growth. The reflective approach presents a number of exploratory tasks and activities, such as journal writing, peer observation and action research, which teachers can carry out in their own classrooms. (Richards and Lockhart, 1994).

Nunan and Lamb (1996) elaborate further,

Reflective teaching...assumes that as our conceptions of language and learning evolve, what is considered appropriate in terms of teaching techniques and classroom management will also change. In other words, what is technically sound today may not be technically sound tomorrow. (p. 120)

Johnson (1998) feels that by reflecting on ineffective lessons we can learn a great deal about what must be considered when planning new lessons or managing other dilemmas that occur in classrooms. To help teachers reflect on their teaching, Sougari (1999) says that microteaching is useful. Microteaching forces teachers to reflect systematically. He clarifies,

The use of many reflective methods, such as peer observation, viewing the lesson, peer feedback, and reflective assignments engage trainees in the reflective process....The potential of rendering reflective practitioners as a result of attending a microteaching course is of utmost importance. (p. 89)

Similarly, Stanley (1998) provides a useful framework for teacher reflectivity. She suggests that the process of developing a reflective teaching practice can be represented as "...a series of phases: (a) engaging with reflection (b) thinking reflectively (c) using reflection (d) sustaining reflection and (e) practising reflection" (p. 585). She stresses that the phases do not represent a sequence and teachers may find themselves at any phase at certain points in time. According to Stanley (1998), "By understanding the concept of phases in the development of a reflective teaching practice, a teacher educator may be more skilled in responding to particular teachers who are trying to implement reflection and reflective action in their teaching" (p. 589).

While reviewing recent books on reflective teaching, Rodgers (1998) makes this surprising statement, "I would someday like to see a book on reflection that simplifies

rather than complicates teacher's lives" (p. 613). This appears uncalled for, if we consider the following explanation by Richard and Lockhart (1994):

What distinguishes these approaches to classroom investigation from other investigative strategies is that they are intended to complement the kinds of things teachers normally do as they teach, rather than impose additional chores on teachers. Furthermore, they let teachers themselves (rather than outsiders) decide which aspects of teaching they wish to explore and which procedures they prefer to use. (p. 14)

Cochran-Smith (2001) points out the contradiction between research that demonstrated the lack of evidence linking inputs (courses taken, requirements met, time spent, and activities engaged in) with actual teacher effectiveness and research which indicated that teachers with greater training are more effective than those with less. She discusses the current trend in North America where emphasis has shifted from inputs to outcomes measures of teacher education. She warns against this linear type of approach stating, "...those who have been required to measure the outcomes of teaching only with pluses and minuses will not be likely to see the value of question marks, concentric circles, and arrows that point both ways and sometimes double back" (p. 34). She promotes instead teacher research and reflection stating, "Through portfolios, analyses of lessons and units, and other self-assessments and reflective activities, teachers learn to look at and make sense of students' work and document the impact of their own practice on students' learning" (p. 23).

Bartlett (1990) goes a step further and espouses becoming a critically reflective teacher. He explains,

Becoming critical means that as teachers we have to transcend the technicalities of teaching and think beyond the need to improve our instructional techniques. This effectively means we have to move away

from the 'how to' questions, which have a limited utilitarian value, to the 'what' and 'why' questions, which regard instructional and managerial techniques not as an end in themselves but as part of a broader educational purpose. Hence, we need to locate teaching in its broader cultural and social context. (p. 205)

Issues in the Teaching of ESL Writing

In this section I have followed the structure of the course in teaching ESL writing which this study investigates. The lecturer of the course divided the course into four major areas: language-focussed activities; genre-based approach; process writing and the treatment of errors. In the following subsections I deal with each of these areas and I have also added a subsection on the choice of topic because of its relevance here.

Language Focussed Activities

The teaching of ESL writing has traditionally focussed on the sentence and grammatical accuracy. Students were taught formal linguistic features of different kind of sentences and expected to come up with sentences of their own. Zamel (1987) reports, "Extensive research has shown that grammar study may have little to do with composing" (p. 276). Similarly, Perl (1979) says,

...students begin to conceive of writing as a 'cosmetic' process where concern for the correct form supersedes development of ideas. As a result, the excitement of composing, of constructing and discovering meaning, is cut off almost before it has begun. (p. 334)

Krashen (1981) made the famous distinction between second language learning and second language acquisition and pointed out that learning does not lead to acquisition. Gere (1986) states, "Grammar instruction...has been dismissed by many

theorists and researchers as useless for improving the quality of writing” (p. 44).

However, many researchers have since questioned the conclusions of second language acquisition theorists. Nunan (1995) states that a more balanced view has emerged from recent research in which grammar has been reinstated. He says, “The notion that the learning of grammar is a linear, step-by-step process has largely been replaced by an organic, even metamorphical, view in which the development of grammatical competence is seen in terms of process as well as product” (p. 166). Nunan (2001) explains, “The organic metaphor sees second language acquisition more like growing a garden than building a wall. From such a perspective, learners do not learn one thing perfectly, one item at a time, but numerous things simultaneous (and imperfectly)” (p. 192). Ellis (1990) argues that conscious learning can lead to acquisition when the student is at the appropriate stage of development and has appropriate learning style. Similarly, Hughes and McCarthy (1998) state,

Recent skepticism about the levels of accuracy provided by purely communication approaches and reported successes of the focus-on-form movement suggest that the time is right to reevaluate the explicit teaching of grammar....A global rather than an Anglo-U.S.-centric view of teaching methods shows that there are good reasons why traditional pedagogic grammar has held sway, even during the communication revolution. (p. 282)

Hughes and McCarthy (1998) point out both the benefits and drawbacks of sentence-based approaches and argue instead for “discourse grammar” which they defined as “grammar that is fully explicable only with reference to contextual features and speakers’ or writers’ moment-to-moment creation of interaction” (p. 266). Morais (2000), while discussing the experience of ESL learners in Malaysia, concurs with this

view, saying, "I strongly believe that rhetorical and language code problems need to be addressed at the same time at the intermediate and advanced levels" (p. 3).

The course on teaching ESL writing (which this study investigates) began with language-focussed activities. The following concluding statement of Hughes and McCarthy (1998) justifies this decision.

In all probability, a wisely chosen combination will be the best course of action in most situations, and teachers may best tackle many complexities of English grammar (e.g., prepositions, dative movement, adverb positions) first through a simplified, sentence-based approach, moving later to the discursive nuances of larger contexts. (p. 285)

Dissatisfaction with the sentence-based approach led to the current traditional approach. The term "current traditional paradigm" was coined by Richard Young to describe what he saw as the dominating composition pedagogy in the twentieth century. The current traditional approach developed out of Harvard Reports in the 1890s warning that students must be prepared to write mechanically correct papers. An increasing awareness of ESL students' needs led to suggestions that guided composition was not enough and that there was more to writing than building grammatical sentences. Attention under this approach is on form, style, correctness, sentences and paragraphs. Topic sentences and the typical five-paragraph essay are emphasised here. The emphasis is on the composed product with a strong concern for syntax, spelling and punctuation. Discourse is classified into description, narration, exposition and argument. The teacher's role is to correct completed essays. (Gere, 1986). According to Gere (1986), "The nagging Miss Fidditch commonly described as hounding composition classes with details of mechanical correctness can trace her ancestry to the Harvard reports" (p. 37).

Doughty and Williams (1998) attribute the reawakening of interest in the role of attention to form to Michael Long who distinguished between “focus on forms,” which characterises synthetic approaches to language teaching, and what he called “focus on form”, in which “...the learner’s attention is drawn precisely to a linguistic feature as necessitated by a communicative demand” (Doughty and Williams, 1998, p. 3). Long and Robinson (1998) explain that focus on form entails making students aware of new target language items, rules and regularities by highlighting them in the input “...but not necessarily to encourage students to produce them. And certainly not correctly, right away” (p. 17). Larsen-Freeman (2001) further explains,

Instead of starting with a grammar point, a lesson might revolve around students’ understanding content or completing a task. When a grammatical problem is encountered, a focus on form takes place immediately by drawing students’ attention to it, i.e. promoting their noticing. At a later point activities may be introduced which highlight that point in the target language. (p. 39)

Explaining the teaching of grammar communicatively, Nunan (1999), states,

Grammatical patterns are matched to particular communicative meanings so that learners can see the connection between form and function. Learners learn how to choose the right pattern to express the ideas and feelings they want to express. They learn how to use grammar to express different communicative meanings. Words are grouped meaningfully and are taught through tasks involving semantic networking, concept mapping, and classifying. (p. 78)

Doughty and Williams (1998) conclude that there is no single solution concerning implementing focus on form in communicative classrooms and it is wise to leave it to teachers to decide, on the basis of focus on form pedagogical principles, what degree of explicitness of attention to form is to be in his or her classroom.

The Genre-Based Approach

“It must be said at the outset that the term *genre* has caused considerable confusion and annoyance” (Richardson, 1994, p. 124). Devitt (1998) states, “Because the traditional view of genre as a taxonomy of literary texts has been so entrenched, genre theorists have, not surprisingly, worked to define the new conception of genre in contrast to this traditional view” (p. 609).

Since the mid 1980s there has been considerable interest in the genre-based approach originating from the work of Miller (1984, in Freedway & Medway 1994), Halliday (1988), Swales (1990) and Bhatia (1993).

Miller (1984/1994), while explaining genre as social action, states,

...if the term ‘genre’ is to mean anything theoretically or critically useful, it cannot refer to just any category or kind of discourse... I will be arguing that a theoretically sound definition of genre must be centred not on the substance or form of discourse but on the action it is used to accomplish. To do so I will examine the connection between genre and the recurrent situation and the way in which genre can be said to represent typified rhetorical action. (p. 23)

Miller (1984/1994) defines genre as, “typified rhetorical actions based in recurrent situations” (p. 31). Swales (1990), explains genre in relation to discourse communities which he defines as “socio-rhetorical networks that form in order to work towards sets of common goals” (p. 8). Swales (1990) offers six criteria of discourse communities that help to hold particular genres in place. Swales criteria are:

1. a discourse community has a broadly agreed-upon set of common public goals;
2. a discourse community has mechanisms for intercommunication among its members;
3. a discourse community uses its participatory mechanisms primarily to provide information and feedback;

4. a discourse community utilizes and hence possesses one or more genres in the communicative furtherance of its aims;
5. in addition to owning genres, a discourse community has acquired some specific lexis;
6. a discourse community has a threshold level of members with suitable degrees of relevant content and discursual expertise. (p. 24)

Ramanathan and Kaplan (2000) state that one value of Swales criteria is that they provide a baseline template from which to begin talking about genres. They further add that genres evolve to adapt to changes in ideologies and worldview of the discourse communities, giving the example that the use of the first person, a personal style and an active voice is being used with empirical research in socio-linguistics, something not acceptable in the past.

Devitt (1996) states,

What is new about this renewed turn toward genre is the study of genre as action rather than form, as a text-type that does something rather than is something. This rhetorical turn has changed the way genre theorists - and those who read their works - think about genre...All of these theorists work to remove genre from the traditional notion of a classificatory system of forms by emphasizing the functioning of genre to achieve rhetorical purpose. (p. 606)

Similarly, Freedman and Medway (1994) state, "...the new term 'genre' has been able to connect a recognition of regularities in discourse types with a broader social and cultural understanding of language in use" (p. 1). Freedman (1994) describes the recent reorientation of interest as a change in understanding linguistic performance from the psychological and cognitive to the social and cultural.

A comprehensive account of the genre approach can be found in Bhatia (1993). He discusses, exhaustively, different ways students can gain valuable insights from the

social and textual features of genre found in business correspondence, academic writing and legal writing.

Key terms under the new understanding of genre appear to be “social and cultural”, “text exemplars” and “moves” as opposed to “forms” and “text types” of the traditional understanding of genre.

In Australia, genre theory developed independently and in isolation from the one being developed largely in North America. It is referred to as the Sydney School because leading proponents were students of M. A. K. Halliday of the University of Sydney. (Freedman, 1994). Two defining features are “a concern with power as the condition of social life and a need for a theory of language that incorporates this as a major premise” (Cope, Kalantis, Kress and Martin, 1993, p. 233). The theory appears to have arisen out of discontent with the process-based curricula or progressive teaching methods. It was felt that the progressive curriculum was marginalising working-class, migrant, aboriginal and other disadvantaged children. Copes et al. (1993) state,

Parents from all backgrounds were becoming increasingly anxious about the hidden assumptions and agendas in progressivist teaching. They were unable to comprehend what it was that their children were supposed to be learning...Commonsense told many in the community that it was time to get “back to basics”, stop all this nonsense and return to what now seemed as a more satisfactory past with its traditional curriculum....Teachers and parents alike welcomed another route forward rather than accept an ignominious retreat to the past....This genre-based approach might, on the surface at least, appear to be the antithesis of liberal education practice, but in real terms it was soon to prove itself a revolutionary step forward. (p. 239)

Flowerdew (1993) explains Hallidayan linguistics which divides up context according to three parameters: field (what the text is about), tenor (the relation between

text producer and text recipient) and mode (the type and purpose of the text). According to Flowerdew (1993), "The three contextual parameters of field, tenor, and mode together determine discourse structure and choice of linguistic realization. Genre analysis, according to this view, is the study of how the contextual parameters, discourse structure and language interrelate" (p. 304). Flowerdew (1993) argues for focussing on the process of learning about, and how to participate in genres as opposed to a procedure which focuses solely on the end-product of specific varieties of genre. Similarly, several studies (e.g., Callaghan, Knapp and Nobel, 1993; Kay and Dudley-Evans, 1998; Bhatia, 1999) discuss the desirability of combining the genre and process approaches. According to Kay and Dudley-Evans (1998), "Such an approach would combine knowledge about the genre product with the opportunity to plan, draft, revise and edit work, as well as provide the opportunity for greater interaction" (p. 312).

Hyon (1996) points out that in ESP, researchers have focussed on the implications of genre theory for English for academic purposes (EAP) and English for professional communication (EPC) classrooms. Genre theory, he feels, can help nonnative speakers of English master the functions and linguistic conventions of texts that they need to read and write in their disciplines and professions.

Criticism of the Genre-Based Approach

Freeman and Medway (1994) present two instances of professionals complaining of the genre they have to use in their work.

A young professional we observed, skilled in the production of the sort of rhetorically complex documents we have learnt to respect, shocked us with the testimony that writing them was largely an experience of

frustration and stultification. Extended involvement in the genre left him with an overwhelming urge to engage in very different sorts of writing away from the office that offered scope for thinking, reflecting, imagining, discovering and creating, capabilities which he felt were endangered by his weekday labours at the workplace genres. (p. 13)

The other complaint was from a psychiatrist working with children. The psychiatrist had to use a highly prescriptive genre for interviewing parents.

The procedure, known as DSM-III, ensures coverage of a range of topics considered significant and enables the parent interview to be completed more quickly than a more open-ended procedure would permit. There is some indication, though, that in the case reported the resulting efficiency was not necessarily to the patient's benefit, and, in addition, caused professional frustration for the psychiatrist. She missed the insights which may sometimes be gained by rather looser interviews: 'I just can't let the parent go off on tangents. Which is too bad, because sometimes by following the parent's lead you get the richest material.' (McCarthy, 1991, cited in Freedman and Medway, 1994, p. 13)

Concerning North American genre studies, Freedman (1994) points out that direct translation into teaching is almost entirely absent (in contrast to the Sydney School). "In fact, if genres are responses to contexts, can they be learned at all out of context?" (Freedman, 1994, p. 194). Luke (1994, cited in Freedman, 1994) presents a powerful critique of the Sydney School. He points to the naivety of the assumption of relationship between genre and power.

In a study done by Bridgeman and Carlson (1984), it was found that EAP writing classes emphasise linguistic and rhetorical forms more than content whereas in the other courses the reverse was true. Similarly, Leki and Carson (1997) describe the writing experiences of students undergoing EAP writing courses and their experiences in other university courses as "completely different worlds" (p. 39). They found that EAP writing

classes differ considerably from other academic courses in the **emphasis** placed on various aspects of writing. Students in their study reported that **what is valued** in writing for EAP writing classes is different from what is valued in other academic courses.

The Process Writing Approach

The process approach arose out of dissatisfaction with **guided** composition and the current traditional approach, which focussed on the **product**. Advocates of this approach looked at first language composing process research for **new ideas** and assumed that ESL writers use strategies similar to those of native speakers of English. The composing process is seen as non-linear and exploratory and **writers discover** and reformulate their ideas as they attempt to write. The methodology involves conferencing, guidance through and intervention in the writing process and **composing** means expressing ideas, conveying meaning, thinking and rewriting drafts. The focus is on the **writer** and heuristic strategies. Topics are meaningful, of importance or at least of interest to the writer. The text as a product is a secondary, derivative concern and learning to write entails developing an efficient and effective **composing** process. Content information and personal expression are more important than **final product**, grammar and usage. (Breen and Candlin, 1980; Zamel, 1983; Raimes, 1985; Perl, 1979).

Applebee (1986) reports that “There is no question that process approaches now dominate the professional literature on the teaching of writing...” (p. 97). Grabe and Kaplan (1996) state the process writing approach freed instruction from:

- the three- or five-paragraph model;
- simplistic assumptions about the organization and ordering of information;

- the typical one-draft writing assignment;
- the assumption that each student should be working alone, or only with the instructor on summative feedback;
- reliance on grammar/usage handbooks and lectures;
- the linear composing model based on outlining, writing, and editing; and it freed instructors from imposed, artificial topics for writing. (p. 86)

Perl (1979) provides this helpful suggestion:

...teachers may need to identify which characteristic components of each student's process facilitate writing and which inhabit it before further teaching takes place. If they do not, teachers of unskilled writers may continue to place themselves in a defeating position: imposing another method of writing instruction upon the students' already internalized processes without first helping students to extricate themselves from knots and tangles in those processes. (p. 334)

Gere (1986) feels that the term "writing process" does not describe a model so much as a way of proceeding within that model" (p. 44). Gere (1986) states, "...many currently available textbooks graft process terminology onto current-traditional, rhetorical and expressive models" (p. 44). Tsui (1996a) feels that teachers should attend to both product and process and is in favour of integrating the process and product approaches. Similarly, Campbell (1998) calls for striking an appropriate balance between process and product pedagogy in writing classrooms.

Criticisms of the Process Approach

Gage (1986) feels that some advocates of the process approach assume that competency in the prescribed heuristic procedure is more important than the quality of the idea it may help the student to discover. Strategies can be reduced to a repetitive exercise and taught as a skill to be mastered in a thoughtless way. Quality of thinking

may not be relevant to the processes the student is guided through. Other critics point out that the process approach does not really prepare students for the demands of the eventual examination and neglects the sociocultural context, the realities of academia. (e.g., Horowitz, 1986; Reid, 1987). Although Silva (1990) states that the process approach “has been generally well and widely received in ESL composition” (p. 16), Applebee (1986) feels that there is a gap between educational theory and educational practice because recent research indicates most teachers follow traditional approaches in a mechanistic, restrictive, haphazard and accidental way. This view is supported by research done in Malaysia which indicates that while many teachers claim to teach process writing; their methodology seldom reflects the process approach (Mahaletchumy, 1994; Bajan Kaur, 1995; Chuang, 1995; Samuel, 1997). Samuel (1997) states,

Malaysian research on process writing classroom presents a picture of many teachers claiming to teach process writing; their pedagogy resembles process writing in form but not substance. For example, writing conferences are top-down invocations from the teacher; drafting resembles “doing corrections” (and is viewed as punitive); feedback focusses on surface features of text; in offering feedback teachers re-write students drafts; and needless to say, the teacher takes ownership of the text, instead of allowing students to appropriate the text they are composing. (p. 231)

The Treatment of Errors

Researchers have noted that error treatment in ESL writing classes is often inconsistent and ambiguous. The questions that teachers face are: when to correct errors; what errors to correct; how to correct and which students to correct. The traditional approach to correct all errors and mistakes in written work is time-consuming and

discouraging for students. Apart from that, there is doubt about how effective this form of correction is.

Zamel (1985) found no significant effect of written comments made by the teacher on a student's writing. "The marks and comments are often confusing, arbitrary, and inaccessible" (p. 79). Others have found that specific feedback on grammar to be useful. (e.g., Fathman and Whally, 1990). Nixon-Ponder (1995) discusses an interesting error correction strategy that involves selecting one paragraph written by each student, writing them verbatim on a large chart with no author identified, and using them to help students identify errors and correct usage in grammar, spelling, and sentence structure.

In contrast to the above studies, Edge (1989) states,

It is the teacher's job to help learners improve their English, and sometimes this is best done by not correcting...In other words, the importance of mistakes is that they should often be ignored. Students need the experience of being listened to as people with things to say. (p. 18)

The process approach lets the students identify and correct their own mistakes, either individually or in groups, and consult the teacher when in doubt. Bird (1994) report that many teachers were surprised at the insight and quality of peer feedback. In contrast, a study done by Zhang (1995) shows that students overwhelmingly prefer teacher feedback to peer feedback. Connor and Asenage (1994) found that students made many revisions but few of these were the result of direct peer group response. Grabe and Kaplan (1996) point out, "To work effectively, peer response groups need to be modelled for students. Teachers need to guide students through several sessions so that students become effective readers and responders" (p. 315). Nelson and Murphy (1992), concurs, suggesting, "By participating as a member of the group, the teacher can model the kinds

of responses expected of students, encourage helpful, positive responses, and discourage students giving critical responses to other writers” (p. 188). In a study done on coaching student writers to be effective peer evaluators, Stanley (1992) concluded “...productivity does not come without considerable investment of time and effort in preparing students for group work” (p. 230).

The Choice of Topic

An interesting and witty debate between Silva (1997; 1998) and Jones (1998) focussed on teacher-chosen and student-chosen topics in ESL writing classes. Silva pointed out that much of what Jones (1998) had to say about the advantages of teacher-chosen topics (e.g., challenging, motivating, appropriate) also applied to student-chosen topics. Silva (1998) poses this question:

Would it not be hypocritical for me as an ESL writing teacher and scholar to compel students to write on topics that I choose when I (rightly, I believe) guard so fervently my academic freedom, one part of which is being able to choose what I want to study and write about? (p. 351)

Silva (1997) suggests,

In my experience, asking ESL writers to write on topics of their choice often results in texts that are well informed, skilfully crafted, very persuasive, and incredibly moving.... I suggest that students be given control of the why and what of writing and that teachers focus on the how, where and when, on facilitating rather than controlling student writing. (p. 362)

I feel that in Malaysia, students need topics closer to their own interest and activities. Sirc (1997) and Kahn-Egan (1998) provocatively titled articles: “Never mind

the tagmemics, Where's the sex pistols?" and "Pedagogy of the pissed: Punk pedagogy in the first year writing classroom" respectively, focus on igniting the passions of student writers. Kahn-Egan (1998) says,

I am not advocating a full-blown, anarchistic, self-mutilating classroom where students scarify themselves. Instead, I'm advocating a classroom where students learn the passion, commitment, and energy that are available from and in writing; where they learn to be critical of themselves, their cultures, and their government - that is, of institutions in general; and, more importantly, where they learn to go beyond finding out what's wrong with the world and begin making it better. (p. 100)

Future Directions

Current interest in critical pedagogy holds promise of a coming pedagogy for ESL writing that should be of particular interest in Malaysia. Critical pedagogy focuses on both the learner and his social environment and has features of process writing, genre theory and teacher reflectivity. It is more concerned about how language can effect personal and social change than it is with how to teach language. Critical pedagogy in ESL/EFL has goals to simultaneously develop English communicative abilities and the ability to apply them to develop a critical awareness of the world. It encourages action to improve matters. (Crookes and Al Lehner, 1998). I feel that topics on social concerns and social action will put some life into the dry, dreary world of Malaysian ESL writers.

Concluding Discussion of Chapter

In the light of these studies, it appears that although there are controversies and contradictions in ways to bring about teacher change there is consensus that lasting change occurs when the culture and society supports and when teachers are aware, able

and motivated to change, to reflect on the change and its consequences and then try again with adjustments according to results and circumstances. The normative-re-educative strategies proposed by Kennedy (1987) appear to offer the greatest potential.

Concerning writing pedagogy, prominent researchers have highlighted a combination of key approaches because students may benefit from the strengths of each of the various approaches. Reid (2001) states “At the start of the twenty-first century, writing classrooms have achieved a more balanced perspective of composition theory...English L2 student writers practise individualised processes to achieve products” (p. 29). This is the stance taken by the lecturer of the course on teaching ESL writing, which this study investigates.

Studies done in Malaysia have focussed on teachers attempting change while already practising in the classroom. Nunan (1996) laments the fact that,

One of the unfortunate realities of much classroom research is that it is carried out on individual lessons (and often on relatively short segments of individual lessons). This denies the researcher access to data which would render many seemingly odd or irrelevant interactions meaningful. (p. 44)

This study, in contrast, takes on a longitudinal view (over a period of three semesters), looking first at five selected teachers’ practices before a course on teaching ESL writing, then, describing the instruction given during the course and finally, analysing the teachers’ attempts to implement innovation in the classroom. Herein, lies the research space for this study. Using a qualitative, case-study research methodology, described in the following chapter, I attempt to describe, analyse and interpret the manner and the problems faced in adopting particular innovations by five selected teachers from different backgrounds and experience.