THE ROLE OF INPUT (READING) AND INSTRUCTION IN DEVELOPING WRITING ABILITY

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This paper attempts to settle an apparent conflict in the area of the acquisition of written discourse, more commonly known as "learning to write."[1] In the first part of this paper, I review arguments supporting the hypothesis that we acquire advanced skills in composition primarily by reading, specifically by self-motivated reading for interest and/or pleasure done over many years. Two sorts of evidence support this hypothesis. It is consistent with current hypotheses of second language acquisition and it is supported by several empirical studies of "good writers". The second part of the paper reviews evidence for what seems to be a competing hypothesis: we learn to write by writing and we can be taught to write. This hypothesis is supported by studies that show that good writers tend to be those who have actually written more and who have received more instruction in writing.

This apparent contradiction is resolved by the simple hypothesis that input, or reading, and instruction/practice make different sorts of contributions to the development of writing skills. It will be argued that input is in fact responsible for the acquisition of planned discourse, that we acquire the "feel" for the style of sophisticated writing via large amounts of reading for meaning. While input provides competence, practice and instruction may help in performance, specifically in planning and revising techniques.

This hypothesis, as we shall see, explains and clarifies a great deal of the research literature on writing, and has clear implications for writing programs. It provides an affirmative answer to the old question of whether learning to write and acquiring a second language are similar, but it does not imply that the pedagogy of second language teaching and teaching writing are the same. While the underlying processes of second language acquisition and learning to write

[1] I thank Dorothy Rankin for valuable discussion. I have also profited from comments from Mari Wesche, Philip Hauptman, Eula Krashen, and Pat Raymond. This paper was presented at the International Congress of Applied Linguistics (AILA), Lund, Sweden, August, 1981.

appear to be similar, we shall argue that there should be differences between second language and writing programs.

The Reading Hypothesis

While the Reading Hypothesis is not a new idea, the inspiration for its current incarnation comes from second language acquisition theory. Second language acquisition theory has recently distinguished language *acquisition*, a subconscious process similar to child language acquisition, from second language *learning*, a conscious process ("knowing about language"). Extensive research (collected in Krashen, 1981) has confirmed that acquisition is a far more powerful and central process than learning. Acquisition is responsible for our fluency in producing second languages, while conscious learning serves only as an editor or monitor, making changes in the form of output under certain, very limited conditions.[2]

According to second language acquisition theory, we acquire in only one way - via input. Acquisition does *not* happen by practicing output and getting feedback on the correctness of utterances.[3] It happens when we obtain *comprehensible input*, when we understand messages in the second language.[4] Acquisition does not happen when we consciously learn a new structure and practice it; it happens when we "go for meaning", when we focus on what is said rather than how it is said.

Speech is considered to be a result of second language acquisition and not a direct cause. Speech emerges naturally after the acquirer has obtained a great deal of comprehensible input, and the grammatical accuracy of speech improves with more input. Indeed, acquirers do best when they are not required to talk at all in early stages of second language acquisition, when they are allowed a silent period, a period during which they receive lots of comprehensible input via listening and/or reading.[5, 6]

[2]In Krashen, 1981 (Stephen D. Krashen, *Second Language Acquisition and Second Language Learning*. London: Pergamon Press), evidence is presented to support the hypothesis that successful use of the conscious grammar requires that three conditions be satisfied: (1) time; in normal conversation, most people do not have time to access and use conscious rules. (2) focus on form; even when there is time, the performer has to be concerned about correctness. (3) know the rule. When all three conditions are met, as in a grammar test, we see significant use of the conscious grammar. When any of them are not met, grammar use is much less.

[3]It has been shown that error correction does not help child language acquisition, despite the intuitions of many parents (see e.g. Roger Brown, Courtney Cazden, and Ursulla Bellugi, "The child's grammar from I to III," in *Studies in Child Language Development*, ed. C. Ferguson and D. Slobin (New York: Holt Rinehart Winston, 1973), pp. 295-333.

[4]Stephen D. Krashen, "The input hypothesis," in *Current Issues in Bilingual Education*, ed. J. Alatis (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 1980), pp. 168-180.

[5]Speech can have a powerful *indirect* effect on acquisition; it can invite input. When you speak, people may speak to you and give you comprehensible input (conversation).

[6]See e.g. Judith O. Gary, "Why speak if you don't need to?" in *Second Language Acquisition*

It has been argued that the "best" input for second language acquisition is not grammatically sequenced, with exercises devoted to practicing one specific structure at a time. While a predictable order of acquisition has been discovered by second language acquisition researchers,[7] this order is a result of acquisition and not its cause. When comprehensible input is supplied in enough variety and quantity, it is hypothesized that acquirers receive sufficient practice on those structures they are "ready" to acquire next.

Comprehensible input is necessary for second language acquisition but it is not sufficient. In some cases, input is provided and understood, but does not result in acquisition. To account for this, the Affective Filter hypothesis was formulated.[8] This hypothesis claims that when affective conditions are not optimal, when the student, in Stevick's terms[9] is "on the defensive", unmotivated, or overanxious, a mental block, called the Affective Filter, will prevent the input from reaching those parts of the brain responsible for language acquisition. It may be that the filter is completely "down" only when the acquirer's focus is totally off the code, the target language, and completely on the message. Acquisition may happen most effectively when the acquirer "forgets" that he or she is listening to or reading a second language.

The new theory implies that second language classes should be filled with comprehensible input presented in a low-anxiety situation. This is precisely what newer and more successful methods do.[10] The second language class is considered a very good place for beginning second language acquisition since it can provide the comprehensible input that the "outside" world will not supply to older acquirers. The goal of the second language class is to bring acquirers to the point where they can begin to understand the language they hear and read outside of class and thus improve on their own.

Conscious rule-learning is not excluded from the second language program but it no longer has the central role. Students can apply rules to their output when such "Monitor-use" does not interfere with communication - for most people, in writing and planned speech. Such Monitor-use can slightly but significantly raise

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Research: Issues and Implications, ed. W. Ritchie (New York: Academic Press, 1978) and Valarian Postovsky, "Effects of delay in oral practice and at the beginning of second language learning," *Modern Language Journal 58* (1974), 229-239.

[7]Heidi Dulay and Marina Burt, "Natural sequences in child second language acquisition," *Language Learning 24* (1974), 37-54 and Stephen Krashen, "Is there a 'natural sequence' in adult second language learning?" *Language Learning, 24* (1974), 235-243.

[8]Heidi Dulay and Marina Burt, "Remarks on creativity in language acquisition," in *Viewpoints on English as a Second Language*, ed. M. Burt, H. Dulay, and M. Finnochiaro (New York: Regents, 1977), pp. 95-126.

[9]Earl Stevick, *Memory, Meaning, and Method.* (Rowley, Mass.: Newbury House, 1976).

[10]See e.g. Earl Stevick, *Teaching Languages: A Way and Ways.* (Rowley, Mass.: Newbury House, 1980).

the formal accuracy of output. It appears to be the case that only a small percentage of the rules of a language are consciously learnable even by able adult students.[11]

Does the Input Hypothesis hold for learning to write? Below, I argue that it does, but that the pedagogical implications for the Input Hypothesis in writing (termed the Reading Hypothesis) are somewhat different. There is an important role for instruction in teaching writing, but it is not simply that of supplying input.

Evidence for the Reading Hypothesis

Before considering some of the evidence supporting the Reading Hypothesis, it should be pointed out that the Reading Hypothesis does not predict a perfect correlation between the amount of pleasure reading and quality of writing for subjects. It maintains only that all good writers will have done large amounts of pleasure reading, not simply "the more reading, the better the writing". There is, in other words, a minimum amount of reading that every good writer has done. The Reading Hypothesis is not expected to distinguish excellent writers from merely good writers –other factors, such as creativity and experience, certainly play a role here. We therefore predict that good writers, as a group, read and have read more than poor writers, and expect to see positive, but not perfect correlations between the amount of reading and writing ability when both good and poor writers are included in a sample.

An increasing number of studies examine writers at the end-point of the language arts educational path –college freshmen and high school seniors. Despite some differences in subjects and methodology, these studies all come to similar conclusions –the good writer is, and has been, a pleasure reader.

Our study[12] examined this issue directly. Sixty-six USC freshmen were given a questionnaire and asked to write an essay at home, which was evaluated by two raters. Only those essays judged to be "highly competent" and "of low competence" were retained for further analysis. The questionnaire asked students to indicate the amount of pleasure reading they had done at different times of their lives. We found very clear differences between good writers and poor writers –good writers reported more pleasure reading at all ages, and especially during the high school years. In fact, not one poor writer reported "a lot" of pleasure reading during high school.

[11]Stephen D. Krashen, *Principles and Practice in Second Language Acquisition.* (New York: Pergamon Press, 1982).

[12]R. Kimberling, L. Wingate, A. Rosser, R. DiChiara, and S. Krashen, cited in Stephen Krashen, "On the acquisition of planned discourse: written English as a second dialect," in *Claremont Reading Conference, 42nd Yearbook,* ed. M. Douglas (Claremont, California: Claremont Graduate School, 1978). pp. 173-185.

Woodward and Phillips[13] conducted a similar survey among 919 freshmen at the University of Miami. Here good writers were defined as those who received grades of "A" or "B" in a writing class (31% of the sample), while poor writers received "D" or "E" (17%). While Woodward and Phillips did not look back in time, there was evidence that good writers read more at the time of the questionnaire; good writers reported more reading of the daily newspaper than poor writers (the only question that probed voluntary reading habits). Interestingly, there were no outstanding differences between the groups with respect to the amount of assigned reading in high school, although more poor writers reported no assigned reading. This suggests that it is voluntary reading that makes the difference.

Applebee's survey[14] of 481 good high school writers, winnners of the 1977 NCTE achievement awards in writing, adds further evidence, although it lacks a control group. Applebee reported that "...these successful writers were also regular readers. For voluntary reading, they reported an average of 14 books over the summer vacation, and another four books in the first eight to ten weeks of their senior year."[15]

Ryan's study[16] provides more indirect support. Ryan compared 54 "regular" and 55 "intensive" writers, that is, those in normal college freshman writing classes and those who were assigned to special sections because of writing problems. After conducting home interviews, Ryan reported that the regular writers' homes had more books and a greater variety of books. This finding is only weakly supported by Woodward and Phillips, who found that more poor writers reported no books in the home; equal numbers of good and poor writers reported many books in the home, however. Ryan also found that the parents of good writers had read to them more as children, and that these parents also read more themselves.

Thus far this research encourages the hypothesis that good writers have done more voluntary reading than poor writers, and have done so for many years. The age factor found in Kimberling et. al. raises the question of whether there is a "critical period" for learning to write - need the input come at a specific time? We return to this issue later.

Several studies report statistical correlations between reading and writing

[13]J. Woodward and A. Phillips, "A profile of the poor writer," *Research in the Teaching of English 1* (1967), 41-53.

[14]A. Applebee, "Teaching high-achieving students: a survey of the winners of the 1977 NCTE Achievement Awards in writing," *Research in the Teaching of English 12* (1978), 339-348.

[15]Applebee, p. 340.

[16]John Ryan, "Family patterns of reading problems: the family that reads together," in *Claremont Reading Conference, 41st Yearbook*, ed. M. Douglas (Claremont, California: Claremont Graduate School, 1977). pp. 159-163.

abilities, i.e. they show that those who score higher on a test of reading also tend to score higher on a writing test. Such correlations would be expected if indeed reading causes writing, and if those who do more pleasure reading are better readers. Grobe and Grobe[17] reported such a relationship for college freshmen, while Evanechk, Ollil and Armstrong[18] reported a significant correlation between performance on a reading test and a measure of syntactic complexity applied to student written output for sixth graders.[19]

Apparent Counterevidence to the Reading Hypothesis

While the evidence cited above is consistent with the Reading Hypothesis, there is additional evidence that supports what seems to be an alternative view. These studies suggest that writing is, or can be, taught and that it improves with practice.

Bamberg[20] compared UCLA freshmen in regular composition classes with those who had to take remedial English, and found that the regular students had had more expository writing practice in high school. McQueen, Murray, and Evans[21] reported better performance on the University of Nevada English placement test and better grades in freshmen English for those students coming from high schools that required more writing. Woodward and Phillips, discussed earlier, found that more poor writers reported doing no writing in high school English.

Does this mean that writing can be explicitly taught, that it can be consciously learned instead of, or in addition to, subconsciously acquired? In the following section, I argue that we do gain something by instruction and by practice, but it is not the acquisition of the writing skill. First, I comment on the learnability of writing. Then, after reviewing the literature of the composing process, we arrive

[17]Shelley Grobe and Cary Grobe, "Reading skill as a correlate of writing ability in college freshmen," *Reading World* (October, 1977) pp. 50-54.

[18]Peter Evanechk, Lloyd Ollil, and Robert Armstrong, "An investigation of the relationship between children's performance in written language and their reading ability," *Research in the Teaching of English 8* (1974), 315-326.

[19]Mari Wesche has pointed out to me that in some cases it is conceivable that the input necessary for the acquisition of written skills can be gained in the aural modality, via discussion and argumentation. It is thus not reading per se but comprehension of what E. Ochs calls "planned discourse" that causes the development of writing skills. Planned discourse usually comes in written form, but need not. This hypothesis is testable. Can a dyslexic, unable to read easily, learn to write after interaction with aural planned discourse? (suggested by M. Wesche).

[20]Betty Bamberg, "Composition instruction does make a difference: a comparison of the high school preparation of college freshmen in regular and remedial English classes," *Research in the Teaching of English 12* (1978), 47-59.

[21]Robert McQueen, A. Keith Murray, and Frederika Evans, "Relationships between writing required in high school and English proficiency in college," *Journal of Experimental Education 31* (1963), 419-423.

at a hypothesis that is consistent with both the Reading Hypothesis and the apparent counterevidence.

Can Writing be Learned?

The available evidence suggests that significant parts of the writing skill cannot be consciously learned, but are subconsciously acquired by good writers. Several sorts of arguments support this, both on the level of grammar and discourse. If these arguments are valid, they imply that instruction in writing must do something other than rule-teaching when it helps writing ability develop.

There is no evidence that grammar study helps composition writing. Several research projects[22] have compared grade school and high school classes that studied grammar with those that did not, and found little or no difference when writing ability was the dependent variable. This result held whether traditional or transformational grammar was used. Similar results have been found in the good and poor writer studies discussed earlier; good and poor freshmen writers report equal amounts of grammar training in high school.[23]

The very complexity of grammar is another powerful argument against its learnability. Linguists have described, by their own admission, only fragments of the grammar of English; teachers know only a portion of this fragment, and do not teach all they know. We are, also, only now beginning to discover the often subtle grammatical differences between good and poor writing.[24] This complexity is a barrier to learning, but not to acquisition.

The complexity argument also holds on the discourse level. Descriptive studies[25] show how amazingly complex planned discourse is, and how little of it our pedagogical descriptions capture. This predicts that explicit instruction at the discourse level will succeed only in teaching the tip of the iceberg, the most obvious points of organization. Unfortunately, practically no studies exist that shed light on how much of planned discourse is teachable. Shaughnessy's study[26] of "severely unprepared" adult students provides some data. After one semester of "low intensity" instruction (four hours per week plus conferences), she reported that almost all 50 students showed improvement and "three-fifths gave

[22]For a review, see Janice Neulieb, "The relation of formal grammar to composition," *College Composition and Communication 28* (1977), 247-250.

[23]Bamberg, 1978; Woodward and Phillips, 1967.

[24]See, for example, Robert Potter, "Sentence structure and prose quality: an exploratory study," in *Teaching High School Composition*, ed. G. Tate and E. Corbett (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970). pp. 174-183. Potter reported that good tenth grade writers used more passives, more conditionals, more nominalizations, more variety of relative pronouns, and fewer T-units, among other differences. It is doubtful that this was a result of explicit instruction.

[25]See for example D. Crystal and D. Davy, *Investigating English Style* (London: Longmans, 1969).

[26]Mina Shaughnessy, *Errors and Expectations*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977).

evidence of over-all and marked improvement."[27] Progress was made, however, in just those areas that appear to be consciously learnable, e.g. handwriting, spelling. Changes in organization were limited to the most obvious aspects of planned discourse: there was increased evidence in the final essay that students were able to "follow the rudiments of a plan... at least 50 per cent of the students managed to stay with their topics. In illustrating their points, students tended to limit themselves to one example drawn usually from personal incident or observation and rarely did they choose to develop more than one aspect of a topic statement."[28] This is progress, and laudable progress, but it confirms that only the most obvious aspects of organization can be taught. Studies with more advanced students are clearly called for.

Further evidence against the learnability of most of grammar and discourse can come from studies of error correction. According to second language acquisition theory, error correction leads to inductive conscious learning; error correction is supposed to help the learner reflect on, adjust, and/or discover the rule that was broken. If error correction is effective, it is therefore evidence in favor of the learnability of grammar and/or discourse. I am aware of only one study of error correction in composition. Stiff[29] compared three groups of college freshmen, those receiving "marginal" corrections on compositions (both grammar and discourse level corrections in the margin of the text, commenting on specific points in the paper), those receiving "terminal" corrections (comments at the end of the paper focussing on argumentation and style, with only editing comments in the text), and those receiving both types of correction. Stiff reported no significant difference between the groups, and, even more discouraging, no significant pre- to post-test gains over the course of the semester for any one group.

Interestingly, students "almost unanimously preferred their compositions to be corrected both marginally and terminally; students in groups I and II complained that they had not been given full correction, while students in group III seemed generally pleased with the type of correction their papers received."[30]

It is interesting to note that studies of error correction in second language acquisition yield similar results. When put to the test, error correction nearly always fails,[31] a finding consistent with my conclusions that conscious learning is

[27]Shaughnessy, p. 282.

[28]Shaughnessy, p. 283.

[29]Robert Stiff, "The effect upon student composition of particular correction techniques," *Research in the Teaching of English 1* (1967), 54-75.

[30]Stiff, p. 62.

[31]See for example, Andrew Cohen and Margaret Robbins, "Toward assessing interlanguage performance: the relationship between selected errors, learners' characteristics and learners' explanations," *Language Learning 26* (1976), 45-66; John Fanselow, "The treatment of error in oral work," *Foreign Language Annals 10* (1977), 583-593.

very limited.[32] Cathcart and Olsen[33] report, however, that adult second language students generally like to be corrected. In both cases, composition and second language, teachers and students may be guided more by superstition than fact.[34]

Research on the Writing Process

If the above argumentation and evidence is correct, reading contributes heavily to the writing skill, and so does instruction, but conscious learning of grammar and style make at best limited contributions. What does instruction contribute? We turn again to studies of good and poor writers in an attempt to answer this question, but this time to studies of a different sort, studies of the writing process.

Planning

The good writer plans more than the poor writer. This does not necessarily mean the use of a formal outline, nor is it always "prewriting". Emig's study[35] of professional writers revealed that very few used the standard outline form but all reported some kind of planning of content and organization. Stallard[36] found that good and average high school writers did not differ in outlining behavior, but good writers took more time before actually writing, once they were given the topic in an in-class essay situation (4.18 minutes as compared to 2.3 minutes) and took more time during writing, actually writing at a slower pace. Similar results were reported by Pianko[37] in a study of "traditional" and "remedial" community college freshmen. As in Stallard's study, the better writers took more time before writing (1.64 minutes versus 1.0 minutes), reported more prewriting for writing done outside school, paused nearly twice as often during writing, and rescanned their work three times as often as the remedials did.[38] As in Stallard's study, few of Pianko's subjects used formal outlines.

[32]Stephen D. Krashen, *Principles and Practice in Second Language Acquisition.* (New York: Pergamon Press, id).

[33]Ruth Cathcart and Judy Winn-Bell Olsen, "Teachers' and students' preferences for correction of classroom conversation errors," in *On TESOL '77*, ed. J. Fanselow and R. Crymes (Washington: TESOL).

[34]See Stiff's remarks, p. 63.

[35]Janet Emig, "The composing process: a review of the literature," in *Contemporary Rhetoric: Conceptual Backgrounds with Readings*, ed. W.R. Winterowd. (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich).

[36]C. Stallard, "An analysis of writing behavior of good student writers," *Research in the Teaching of English 8* (1974), 206-218.

[37]Sharon Pianko, "A description of the composing processes of college freshmen writers," *Research in the Teaching of English 13* (1979), pp. 5-22.

[38]Pianko's remedial writers, unlike Stallard's lower group (who were "average"), took longer to write. Closer analysis revealed that this was due to overconcern about editing and form (see subsequent discussion in text). Thus, very good and very poor writers take longer than average writers, but for different reasons.

Revision

The good writer is also a reviser. Again, good and poor writer studies confirm this. Stallard's good writers made more revisions than did his average writers (12.24 revisions per paper as compared to 4.26 times per paper) and stopped more often to read what they had written (3.73 times per paper as compared with about once per paper). Pianko's data on rescanning is also consistent with this conclusion (see above).

Poor writers do review what they have written and make changes, but the kinds of changes they make are different. Poor writers focus much more on form and less on content, and this practice gets in their way. Pianko noted that her remedial students were overconcerned with mechanics and usage.[39] Perl,[40] in an intensive study of five "unskilled" college writers also reported this. Her subject, "Tony", for example, had a concern for correct form "that actually inhibited the development of ideas. In none of the writing sessions did he ever write more than two sentences before he began to edit."[41] Of 234 changes Tony made in his composing sessions, over several compositions, only 24 had to do with content. The vast majority were changes in form, i.e. spelling, punctuation, verb changes, etc.

Perl's five writers were apparently under the impression that revising was essentially editing, the application of conscious rules to small points of grammar, spelling and punctuation, and that such editing was a supremely important part of the composing process. Their "premature" editing broke "the rhythm generated by thinking and writing", causing them "to lose track of their ideas."[42] These students were so overconcerned with form, in other words, that they had trouble getting their words down on paper to express their ideas.

Pianko summarizes much of this literature with the generalization that the good writer reflects more on what is written.[43] They plan and revise more, and revision for the good writer is essentially concerned with content. Poor writers overuse the conscious grammar and are overconcerned with how they are writing at the expense of what they are trying to communicate.

A Synthesis

We are now ready to bring the threads together and present a set of hypotheses that account for all the data presented here. Stated simply, input, reading,

[39]Pianko, p. 13.

[40]Sondra Perl, "The composing processes of unskilled college writers," *Research in the Teaching of English 13* (1979), 317-336.

[41]Perl, p. 324.

[42]Perl, p. 333.

[43]Pianko, p. 21.

remains the only way of developing competence in writing, but aspects of performance can either be taught, or develop, in some cases, with writing practice.

Input gives the good writer the "feel" for how good writing looks, its organization and its texture. It provides "competence", in the Chomskian sense, the tacit knowledge the good writer has of what good writing is, that he or she cannot always describe.

Efficient use of the composing process can be taught and is discovered by some writers through actual writing practice. In essence, good writers learn the necessity of planning and revision, the latter with an emphasis on content and not form.

This hypothesis predicts that three groups exist, with shades in between:
(1) Readers who can write well, who plan and revise.
(2) Readers who do not write well, who do not plan and revise.
(3) Non-readers.

It also predicts that those in group (2) will be able to improve with instruction but that those in group (3) will probably not improve easily with instruction. My interpretation of Perl's findings is that her five unskilled writers were non-readers, and thus did not have the "feel" for good writing. While readers are able to utilize their acquired competence in revision, non-readers simply do not have this "feel", and are forced to use, and overuse, conscious rules.

Pedagogy

While my conclusions are post-hoc, it is useful to discuss their implications for a writing program. The success or failure of a program based on a theory or set of hypotheses is an opportunity to test that theory or those hypotheses. Students are indeed being used as guinea pigs in such experimental programs, but they will at least have the benefit of having a program based on an empirically grounded theory, rather than on one based only on rumor and fashion.

Three components of the writing program will be discussed: reading, grammar teaching, and teaching the composing process.

1) Reading: The language arts program, especially in the early years, should contain devices to encourage reading outside of school. Perhaps the main focus of "English teaching" in early grades should be to provide the tools for reading and to stimulate interest in pleasure reading. The theory presented here implies, however, that encouraging reading for the sake of writing development is a long-term investment; it may only pay off after several years.

2) Grammar: Explicit information about grammar can also be part of the writing program. The theory does not imply rejection of such teaching but forces a re-evaluation of its role. Grammar teaching has two possible functions in the

language arts program. First is its use as a Monitor or editor. This function is important, and some rules for editing can certainly be taught. They are a small subset of the entire grammar, however, and their instruction is but a small part of the language arts program. A second function for grammar teaching has nothing to do with developing writing ability - this is instruction about the structure of language, known as linguistics. The sentence diagramming exercises prominent in some programs have, I think, this goal. There are many educational benefits deriving from the study of linguistics. The study of the structure of language gives students an appreciation of both the surface differences and deep similarities among the languages of the world and their speakers. It allows the study of sociolinguistics and historical linguistics, with their implications for "nonstandard" speech, prescriptivism, and correctness in usage. It even leads to the study of language acquisition and the Input Hypothesis. This is part of language arts, but not teaching writing.[44]

3) Composing process: The third, and most important part of the writing program is encouraging the development of an efficient composing process, even for students who have done extensive pleasure reading. This means bringing students to the realization that both planning and revision are part of the writing process, presenting them with different planning and prewriting options (e.g. formal outlining, clustering) and allowing them to select from these options, showing how professional writers plan and revise, etc. It is possible that many students will discover their own planning and revising strategies with practice, while others will profit from explicit discussion.[45] The theory implies, however, that working with the composing process is not teaching writing in the sense that it is not helping the student acquire a new code. This is done elsewhere, outside the class. Rather, the central goal of the class is to teach the student the reality of the composing process, "the messy process that leads to clarity,"[46] the fact that writing does not simply consist of writing a composition or essay from start to finish in one linear flow. This fact is perhaps the major lesson to be learned in writing classes.[47]

[44]Martha Kolln ("Closing the books on alchemy," *College Composition and Communication, 32* (1981), 139-151.) argues that the research literature has not completely ruled out the utility of grammar teaching. Her review leads her to the conclusion that grammar teaching should help students "understand consciously the system they know subconsciously as native speakers" (p. 150), which will help in writing. In our terms, this means we should help students consciously learn what they have already acquired. There are some possible benefits resulting from this practice. It is part of the study of linguistics (see text), which has clear educational benefits aside from improving writing. I have argued that in second language performance (Krashen, 1981) it may give "over-users of the Monitor" more confidence and faith in their acquired knowledge and actually make them more fluent and less dependent on learned rules. Sentence-combining may have a similar "releasing" effect, encouraging the performance of rules that have been acquired but that the reluctant performer hesitates to use (W.R. Winterowd, personal communication).

[45]B. Hansen, "Rewriting is a waste of time," *College English 39* (1978), 956-960.

[46]Shaugnessy, p. 79.

[47]Shaughnessy points out that students often have the mistaken impression that "the point in

As discussed earlier, it may be difficult to help the non-reader, the student who does not have a feel for what good writing looks like. It is quite possible that the non-reader can be encouraged to plan, but it will be difficult to "teach" revision for style, since the non-reader has little or no sense of what he or she is aiming for. Perhaps our goal here should be to help the non-reader separate revision from editing, encouraging only content revisions at first, with an emphasis on audience awareness and the logical flow of ideas, and limiting proofreading or editing changes to those parts of the grammar that are "learnable", concrete rules that can be described easily and remembered. We should wait for acquisition to deal with more subtle and complex stylistic problems.[48] This may reduce the overediting poor writers do, and will hopefully increase fluency and have some effect on organization.

The non-reader's writing, however, will not have the texture and polish of good prose without the real cure, self-motivated, extensive reading. And the research does not give us any reason for pessimism. Despite our findings, cited earlier, that pleasure reading during high school is a strong predictor of college writing, there may not be a rigid "critical period" for the acquisition of the writing skill. The high school years may simply be the first time readers meet true expository prose. The ability of adult second language acquirers to acquire impressive amounts of second languages suggests that the acquisition process is alive and well in the adult, and gives us hope that even the adult non-reader can make significant progress in the acquisition of writing skill.

If the Reading Hypothesis is correct, it can be claimed that learning to write and second language acquisition use the same underlying mechanisms. The Input Hypothesis holds for both. While the process may be the same, the pedagogical implications are somewhat different. Second language classes provide the comprehensible input that the outside world will not or cannot provide. The ideal second language class, according to this view, is one that is filled with comprehensible input. While reading is the main "cause" of writing ability, this does not imply that we should devote our writing classes simply to reading: students can find comprehensible input on the outside. Part of our job, especially in grade school, is to encourage and facilitate this reading. The class itself can then be devoted to helping writing performance.

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writing is to get everything right the first time and that the need to change things is a mark of the amateur... Indeed, beginning writers often blame themselves for having to revise and even for not being able to start at all - problems only too familiar to the professional writer as well." (p. 79; p. 81).

[48]Our research in second language acquisition (Krashen, 1982) suggests that even for "good language learners", aspects of grammar beyond bound morphology are difficult to learn and remember. Just what is "learnable" for most people can be determined by error analysis and self-correction studies. I would guess that rules such as the its-it's distinction are learnable, for example, while some of the rules for the use of commas and semi-colons may not be.