Teaching English Writing for a Global Context: An Examination of NS, ESL and EFL Learning Strategies That Work

Rebecca K. Webb
Rangsit University

Abstract

This study, examines two well-known writing pedagogies from the fields of Composition and Rhetoric, and Second Language Acquisition (SLA) for teaching literacy, or reading and writing skills[1] in order to identify intersections for the English Language Learner (ELL) in an EFL learning environment. In addition, I present both quantitative and qualitative data in order to identify the learning strategies that are most effective from the Native Speaker (NS), English as a Second Language (ESL), and the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning environments. The data is as follows: 1) a survey of the perceptions of both ELL and NS students to analyze their assessment of current instructional methods and learning strategies; 2) an observation of and interview with an ELL student examining the strategy and process for producing effective writing; and 3) analysis of several writing samples from ELL students in EFL writing courses here in Thailand. The purpose of this

examination is to identify where the two pedagogies intersect and identify the best learning strategies for the EFL learning environment in order to improve the acquisition of English writing skills.

Keywords: writing, writing strategies, learning strategies, English literacy

Background

English has become the default language for international commerce and travel this fully globalized world. More students are studying English as a foreign or a second language in both the native and non-native English speaking environments than ever before. This has led to English becoming a Lingua Franca (ELF). One interesting result of this expansion of the English language is the varieties of English that are now known as World Englishes (WE) (Seidholfer, 2009; Bolton, Graddol, & Meierkord, 2011). As excellent as this seems for the monolingual native English speaking tourist or business person, the dominance of English in the world, and the globalized English Language Learner (ELL) presents significant challenges to instructors of English writing courses. Take Indian and British Englishes as an example of the complexity resulting from these global developments. As Richard Xiao explains in his study "Multidimensional Analysis and the Study of World Englishes" (2009), there are significant differences between how Indian and British use English in writing. Indian, he finds, is more "nouny" than British, partly as a result of the native Indian languages and partly as a result of eighteenth century East India Company influences (p. 443). Not only do these differences in the use of the English language present some challenges in how writing teachers teach discrete skills such as writing style and writing modes, it also presents some obstacles for the readers of the text. It is within this global context that we must recognize that for our students to succeed, effective skills in English writing are imperative.

It is well established that acquiring the necessary speaking and listening skills in English for EFL students are quite difficult. This is primarily because they lack adequate exposure to the target language outside the classroom. This is not so for the ESL student who lives and works in an English speaking environment and can acquire the necessary communication skills quickly and effectively, including native like pronunciation and syntax. The EFL student, on the other hand, often relies on L1 syntax to produce L2 utterances. However, EFL, ESL, and native language learning environments share many of the same struggles when it comes to developing effective writing skills. Therefore, it is helpful to review the English writing pedagogies, learning strategies and student perceptions from both the native and the non- native learner environments.

Current trends in the composition classroom have widely accepted that the regular composition classroom dominated by NS students is benefited by the process writing approach. With its emphasis on drafting and revising, peer group work on reading and writing assignments, and contextualized grammar instruction addressed during conferences and tutoring sessions, the process writing approach has been found to be ideally suited to developing and fine tuning writing skills. However, it is understood that these students have been immersed in English both at home and at school for eighteen to nineteen years. As noted already, the ELLs are not so homogenous with their wide range of skill levels and experience with their L2. Even still, the process writing method has been used successfully in ESL classrooms as well, but with slightly more emphasis on discrete skills in syntax and lexicon. It also has been used successfully in the EFL classroom, but with some further modifications to the process; such as much more time spent on proofreading, error correction, and grammar instruction, than on content and development. In addition, there are many more questions and doubts about the helpfulness of group work which some studies have shown may result in better content for the EFL student, but not in better fluency or a lower rate of error (Bria & Jafari, 2013). This generates some pressing

questions for the EFL writing classroom: 1) How effective is the process writing pedagogy in the EFL environment? 2) How can grammar effectively be addressed in a classroom where the needs are high and very diverse? and 3) how can peer-to-peer group work be used effectively to address both content and error correction?

Process Writing in Composition and Rhetoric

The process writing shift in Composition and Rhetoric began in the 1970's in the U.S. The shift away from teaching modes of writing, literary analysis, and the classic five paragraph essay was started by two very powerful forces. The first was the new influx of GI Bill students (former soldiers receiving subsidized education from the U.S. military) and political refugees from war torn countries such as Vietnam, Korea, and South America. The second was the political and ideological shift over access to higher education best illustrated by the City University of New York's establishment of a new open admissions program that admitted the rich, the poor, the native, the newly immigrated, the literate and the barely literate residents of New York City to its halls of academia. Many heated debates ensued among academicians about the educability of the great bulk of these students as so many underprepared NS students and ELLs were taking their places in the classrooms of the now accessible university system. As teachers began to focus on this problem in the classroom and in their research, three scholars brought to the debate a variety of radically new ideas and solutions to the problems of how to teach writing to these underprepared students. These three scholars I will use here to summarize the main ideas underpinning the process writing approach.

For Janet Emig (1971) and Peter Elbow (1973), the idea that writing is a process was obvious. Janet Emig's well-known study *The Composing Processes of Twelfth Graders* (1971), provided quantitative and qualitative evidence that the most fruitful and often the best writing was done via a slow process of drafting, reviewing with self and peers, revising and reviewing again and

again, in a seemingly endless loop. The formal school sponsored writing assignment, as Emig points out in her findings, "truncates the process of composing" that in self-sponsored writing can take up to two years (p. 98). This truncating of what appears to be a natural process also disengages the student from the writing they do for school. In short, the student approaches the school sponsored writing assignments as formal tasks with restrictions, rules, and boundaries of language use that must be met and upheld or failure is imminent.

Peter Elbow made a similar discovery about his own writing and then made the radical decision to teach process writing to his own students. The results of his observations from his own writing experiences and those of his students produced another well-known text, *Writing Without Teachers* (1973). In this text, Elbow presents a well-known analogy describing writing like growing and cooking ideas rather than transferring them. It provides, I think, an adequate description of the theory underlying the pedagogical practice of the process writing approach.

With the publication of these and several other radical works throughout the 1970's and 1980's, it became clear to many writing teachers that writing was a process that when embraced in the classroom resulted in a much improved written product. Today, the writing classroom includes many process writing activities such as free-writing, clustering, brainstorming, outlining, drafting, revising, etc. Because the process writing approach emphasizes re-visioning and reflecting on the writing process itself, in which students focus on global re-visions to their essays before handing them in to the teacher, a large portion of class time is spent engaging in various levels of drafting from brainstorming, listing, outlining, to developing content and focus, to proofreading. This work is often done in peer groups instead of through lecture, or in isolation because it is believed that such peer-to-peer interaction not only improves both writers' and reviewers' reading and composing processes, but it also creates more motivation in the students to write well because the writer has a tangible audience to consider and from whom he or she will receive instant feedback.

Of course, this new and radical approach to teaching writing did not come without its problems and criticism.

The Grammar and Red Pen Controversy

There were some problems with this movement and, over the years, researchers have addressed them. A major drawback to the process writing approach is that it does not allow for the traditional evaluation and assessment practices in which a teacher collects a student's essay, reads the essay, comments on errors, assigns a grade and returns the essay to the student who will file it away, never to return to it again. If the teacher continues to assess student writing in this format, while teaching process writing, then she is not prioritizing the work the student has been asked to do, which is to write, review, revise and repeat process in order to learn a strategy, or a process for writing from which the student will produce more communicatively effective essays—even if not perfectly accurate. Instead, she is prioritizing the final product, thus reinforcing the same old teaching format that rarely, if ever, coaxed or inspired an Angelou or a Hemmingway. Other criticisms of process writing include how to formally and systematically address severe grammatical problems in student writing when the bulk of the course is taken up with process writing activities. Furthermore, whole class instruction in grammar with its quizzes and exercises is counter-intuitive to a process writing approach where error correction is set aside until the final proofreading and editing stages of the re-visioning process. These last two criticisms are of particular importance for the ELL environment.

After several years of debate and much research, teachers and researchers began to formulate approaches to both assessment and grammar instruction that proved effective for both the traditional college writing course with its bulk of NS students as well as the new era course with its mixture of NS and ELLs. Mina P. Shaughnessy's seminal work *Errors & Expectations: A Guide for the Teacher of Basic Writing* (1977) provided a qualitative map of student errors in the developmental or remedial college

writing courses where the most problematic writing examples are usually found. What her research demonstrates is that no grammar instruction is bad writing instruction. Shaughnessy points out that a lack of mastery over English causes a student to view error as "a barrier that keeps him not only from writing something in formal English but from having something to write" (p. 11). Moreover, this lack of mastery of English grammar, and the continued lack of adequate and effective instruction in it is likely to, as Shaughnessy states, pitch a student "against more obstacles than are apparent to those who have already mastered that code" (p. 13). Finally, Shaughnessy's study demonstrates that the core mission of a writing teacher at all levels of English instruction, whether for NS students or ELLs must be to encourage student mastery of the "dominant code of literacy" (p. 13), which includes basic grammar codes and syntax.

Under this new paradigm of process writing instruction, the most productive way to teach grammar, then, is in the context of student writing based on the teacher's assessment of each student's individual idiosyncrasies that includes understanding their ability with code switching, their native language background if they are ELLS, and previous reading and writing experiences. Whole class grammar instruction, then, might be taught in the context of essay writing fundamentals. Individual students' grammar problems would be addressed in the context of the student's individual essays and would focus on helping students formulate effective communication strategies rather than on the eradication of errors. Although Shaugnessy raised awareness of the pitfalls of whole class grammar instruction vs. no grammar instruction, finding the right fit between grammar instruction and process writing, however, continues to cause vexation especially in the ELL environments in which proofreading and error correction form the bulk of the work. Likewise, the students in an ELL writing environment are often paralyzed by their own fear of grammatical errors and are unable or unwilling to engage in more complex ideas and problems in their writing.

After six years of collecting portfolios from all students in the first-year composition sequence at his community college, Mark Blaauw-Hara and his colleagues discovered that the students' achievement in the outcome of grammar was poor, across the board. Although not surprised by this outcome, in "Why Our Students Need Instruction in Grammar and How We Should Go about it" (2009), Blaauw-Hara sets out to address this problem and provide specific strategies, supported by research to help students achieve the necessary fluency in writing, including their grammar, to succeed in college and in their future professions. Although not an advocate of "whole-class grammar instruction" (p. 166) he points out the importance of including grammar instruction in the composition classroom. Blaauw-Hara describes the "problems with traditional grammar instruction," and provides "productive ways to conceive of grammar and correctness" (p.166). He outlines several specific teaching and learning strategies for addressing grammar in the composition classroom designed around the process writing approach. These strategies include: 1) teacher responses to papers should focus on revision strategies and should not include a grade; 2) there should be more one-on-one teacher student interaction that focuses on talking and listening; and 3) working on grammar in the student's own writing by helping him develop critical reading strategies, providing him with models of good writing, proofreading strategies, and assigning agency to the student by not correcting his errors for him. These strategies not only correspond with the theory and praxis of the process writing approach, but also, as I will discuss next, with whole language learning and critical literacy studies developed by SLA and literacy scholars in recent years.

Intersections: SLA and the Process Writing Approach

In *Teaching ESL Composition: Purpose, Process, and Practice* (2005), ELL teachers and researchers, Dana Ferris and John Hedgcock set out to provide a comprehensive discussion of, as well as practical classroom strategies for teaching ESL composition that emphasizes the process writing method.

Drawing on the work of SLA scholar, Barbara Kroll (1993, 1994, 1998, 2001, 2003), with process writing methods for the ELL environment, Ferris and Hedgcock provide in-depth strategies for teaching ESL composition such as syllabus design, lesson planning, text and materials selections, teacher response to student writing, peer review strategies, teaching grammar and error correction, assessment and using technology in the writing classroom. The binding principles underlying their design for a typical ELL course is that the ELL writing class, quoting from Kroll (2001), "is perhaps best seen as a workshop for students to learn to produce academic essays through mastering techniques for getting started and generating ideas" (p. 73). Their methodological approach to a typical ELL course includes process writing activities, as well as SLA methods such as whole language instruction, and critical literacy.

Ferris' and Hedgcock's approach to process writing and to error correction draw heavily from Elbow's, Flower's and Shaugnessy's theories, and is very similar to Blaauw-Hara's pedagogy described earlier in that they include numerous process writing activities, peer review sessions, and whole language instruction. In addition, as with Blaauw-Hara, they note that error correction does not significantly improve student's writing, nor does whole class grammar instruction. However, they also note that ELLs do require instruction in grammar, but the traditional approach is just as ineffective with them as it has been with the NS student population. Therefore, their approach to grammar instruction, like Blaauw-Hara includes teaching students explicit but relevant instruction in grammar rules, focusing on error correction during the final revision stages, teaching editing and proofreading skills, and focusing on patterns of errors that are frequent and stigmatizing rather than on all errors in a student's paper.

This and other recent studies in SLA (Lin, 2013; Pandey, 2012; & Wei et al, 2012) suggest that the process writing approach can be effectively used with ELL students at all skill levels. They also reveal the continued need for formal instruction in grammar

for all students, but combining two counter-intuitive practices such as grammar instruction with its discrete skills exercises, drills, and quizzes, with process over product instruction is problematic, as many writing teachers have experienced.

What the previous review of research in teaching writing suggests is that both the NS and ELL environments in which process writing, whole language, and critical literacy approaches to teaching are being adopted look more like a whole class writing workshop than a traditional teacher-centered, lecture dominated classroom. Grammar, style, development and critical thinking are addressed in the context of a student's essay and are, therefore, targeted to the student's individual needs. This is the point at which the two pedagogies intersect: Whole Language learning with Process Writing. But, exactly what does this look like and how does it work in terms of classroom instruction? What becomes of the teacher's role? And, can EFL students be trusted with error correction of other EFL student's writing?

Data

Survey of Student Perceptions of Classroom Learning Strategies

To answer the above questions and get closer to a conclusion about the most effective learning strategies for the ELL writing classroom, I conducted a survey of students enrolled in both the NS and ESL composition and reading courses at a college in the U.S. A survey of a total of 186 students consisting of 50 advanced ESL students enrolled in the ESL equivalent of the required first year composition and reading course, and 136 students (mixed with 28 ESL, 89 NS, and 19 other NNS students) in the regular required first year composition and reading course reveals what many students perceive to be the most helpful learning strategies from lectures, to group work, to one-on-one conferencing with an instructor or tutor (see Figures 1 through 4 below). The students were asked to rate each classroom instruction method on a scale from 1 (least helpful) to 5 (most helpful). The classroom instruction methods included: one-on-one

conferencing with an instructor or tutor on grammar and content of student's essay; student-centered classroom group work in large and small groups; and teacher-centered lectures on grammar and elements of the essay. All the students surveyed were knowledgeable of and had previous experience with all forms of instruction listed on the survey.
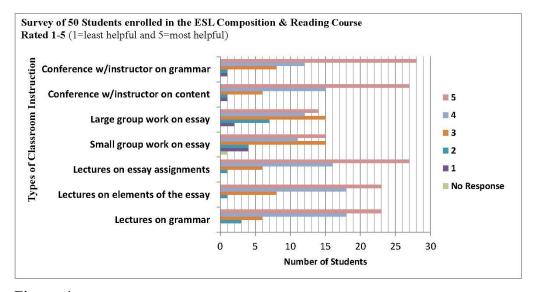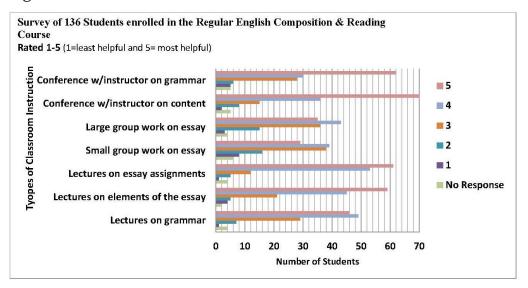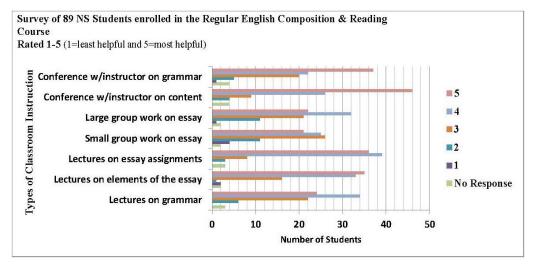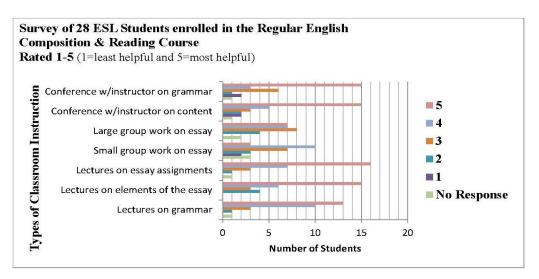

Figure 1

Figure 2

Figure 3

Figure 4

A quantitative analysis of the surveys shows that, not surprisingly, one-on-one conferencing with an instructor is the most helpful and most effective learning strategy. The most surprising outcome of these surveys of ELL and NS students, however, is the low rating that peer-to-peer group work received. As a learning strategy, group work was rated the least helpful of the instructional methods listed in the survey for developing writing skills. Lectures on grammar also received a high rating, higher than group work received, but significantly lower than the

one-on-one conferences on grammar received. This survey introduced some conflicts in the students' perceptions of group work given the value recent studies have placed on student-centered teaching and peer-to-peer group work in helping students develop speaking, reading and writing skills for both NSs and ELLs. The survey also suggests that while students see the usefulness of lectures and explicit instruction in grammar, they find one-on-one conferencing with an instructor or tutor on grammar and essay elements far more helpful than a lecture on discrete skills.

Equally surprising is that the results of the same survey of NS students reveals the same perceptions about learning strategies. The NS students, 89 of 136 surveyed students enrolled in 10 sections of the first year college writing course, reveals that the majority of NS students find the conferences to be the most helpful form of instruction and the group work the least helpful with lectures on grammar and essay elements rated just above group work, but well below one-on-one conferences (see Figure 2).

The conclusions about learning strategies that can be drawn from this survey are that where students find lectures helpful in developing discrete language skills, the one-on-one conferences produce the best results for improving overall writing skills. In addition, while group work still receives high ratings from many writing instructors, students do not seem to perceive it as helpful as do their teachers. This perception may not reflect reality of the students' experience, however. Several studies over the last 14 years have indicated that students are pre-conditioned to distrust the ability of their fellow classmates, and assess its usefulness negatively even when the evidence suggests otherwise (Bria & Jafari 2013). What this means is that when one student makes a suggestion or a correction on a fellow student's paper, the student will often doubt the accuracy of the comment and either ignore it, or ask the teacher for verification. In addition, students do not trust their own ability to critique writing, which is unfortunate because to be a good critic of writing, one only needs to be an effective reader. Therefore, as a learning strategy, group

work is far more effective on overall literacy than the perceptions of these students would suggest. There is more critical thinking and literacy skills development taking place during student-centered classwork than students, and sometimes even their teachers realize.

Observation and Interview: Akiko's Journey

To deepen our understanding of the value of one-on-one conferencing and peer-to-peer group work as a learning strategy, I will discuss the experience of one ELL student who developed her writing skills in an environment very similar to those described previously. In 2010, an advanced ESL student enrolled in my required composition and reading course. The course was a typical first year course required for completion of a Bachelor's degree at any university or college in the U.S. This student, who I will refer to as Akiko, registered for the course after having completed the sequence of ESL and Reading courses at the same college with a curriculum and instructional method similar to those previously described. Akiko is a non-traditional student in her 50's with a husband and two grown children. Her L1 is Japanese and her L2 is English. Prior to enrolling at this college, she had no formal training in English. However, both her sons are native speakers of English and her husband is a language translator with formal training in both English and Japanese. The following is Akiko's journey through the ESL and composition courses to acquire enough fluency in both spoken and written English to fulfill her goal of a four year college degree in the fine arts.

For the first year writing course, I assign five essays, plus significant revision work on three essays, and reading assignments consisting of two book length works and several short essays, the standard requirement for this course. I use the process writing method culminating with an end of term portfolio. My assignments and classroom activities are very similar to those described and recommended previously. For example, classroom work emphasizes developing revision, proofreading, and critical reading strategies, and providing models of good writing. I also

emphasize revision plans in my comments on their essays instead of assigning letter grades or points. In addition, I require conferencing with me and instructors in the Writing Center, and I tailor grammar instruction to individual student need. On the last class meeting of the term, Akiko submitted her portfolio which included three extensively revised essays, a Reflective Cover Letter, and all four essays she wrote over the term.

Based on the revised essays submitted in her portfolio, and the quality of her work throughout the semester, my final assessment of Akiko was that she had achieved mastery of academic writing formalities and standards, had a mature and sophisticated understanding of her own writing and the process of writing, was capable of editing her own work, but also knew to seek out peers to review her work before submitting it, and that she was more than capable of producing consistently strong essays for a variety of rhetorical situations. Her one weakness was being able to accurately follow the established grammar conventions for Standard Academic English. The types of grammatical errors Akiko made were typical. For example, she dropped or misused articles, misused tenses, and sometimes displayed non-English syntax in her sentences. However, even with these errors sprinkled throughout her essays, her meaning was always very clear and her essays were always well developed and articulate. In two years, Akiko had advanced from beginning level English language skills to advanced skills. She became a highly effective communicator and could comprehend difficult academic texts with relative ease.

Given the short period of time Akiko had been formally studying English and the level of mastery she had achieved, I wanted to better understand how she had achieved what eludes so many other ELL's who, like her, are trying to achieve a four year degree at a university in an English speaking environment.

During a personal communication with Akiko on December 1, 2011, one year after completion of my course, she provided me with important insight into her experiences as an ESL student and of her own writing and editing processes that often focused on

error correction, but never at the expense of content and meaning. Akiko, like many of her ESL peers, completed the series of ESL courses as well as one of the developmental reading courses. As she explained to me, her process for completing an essay assignment included studying the assignment, and reflecting on and reviewing previous writing assignments for models. She then would plan her topic and structure for the essay. From there, she would begin with a free writing exercise followed by several revisions before asking a NS to peer review her work for content and grammar.

While explaining to me how she would choose her peer reviewers, I was quite surprised when she informed me that she prefers to elicit help from reviewers who are more focused on meaning as opposed to errors. Akiko felt that in order to address the language difficulties she experienced, she needed someone who could help her with the clarity of her expression and articulation of her meaning. She very deliberately chose a native speaker of English who was not formally trained in language skills over an older, more experienced and formally trained English language user—such as a teacher. In other words, she actively sought out peers as opposed to expert writers. She showed me two things about the kind of help an ELL knows she needs: 1) the ELL needs help making her or his unique meaning more clear for the NS, and 2) the ELL does not want her or his essay marked up for every grammar error in it because that emphasizes error over meaning which they often find very discouraging and ultimately not helpful. Akiko also informed me that she would engage in one-on-one conferences 3 to 4 times for each essay she writes. For these conferences, she would meet with instructors at the Writing Center, but she also would conference with individual NS peers to help her perfect her essays. Finally, Akiko would return to the same peers for review and feedback of her essays because of their familiarity with her unique goals and writing idiosyncrasies—which includes not only her distinctive grammar problems, but also her distinctive use of the language.

It seems clear from Akiko's experience that where grammar errors do continue to plague her writing, explicit grammar instruction is not what helps her at this level in her L2 acquisition. Instead, she elicits input from her peers, but specifically, NS peers. What this interview with an advanced ELL reveals is that, much like an NS student, the ELL at an advanced level of acquisition requires and prefers more individualized and relevant whole language instruction tailored to her or his specific needs. It also supports the benefits of peer-to-peer feedback, especially at the level of content and meaning. The ELL also benefits more from one-on-one conferences than from explicit and whole class lectures on either grammar or elements of the essay. In addition, Akiko's experiences suggest that students receive more comprehensive and relevant feedback when the efforts of the peer reader are concentrated on the work of one writer over an extended period of time.

Analysis: Process Writing and Peer-to-Peer Work in the EFL Classroom
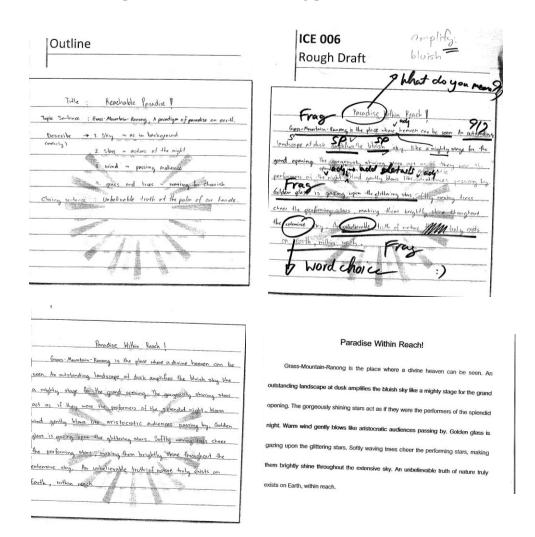
To illustrate how the one-on-one conferencing and peer-to-peer group work learning strategies improve the writing of EFL students, I will discuss the work of some EFL students from writing courses here in Thailand. At Rangsit University, where I teach, we have a number of writing intensive courses offered to students from multiple disciplines. I, and a few of my colleagues actively apply the process writing and whole language methods in our writing courses which includes activities such as brainstorming, outlining, drafting, revising, peer-to-peer group work, and one-on-one conferencing. The courses also include relevant activities in elements of writing, vocabulary, and syntax development. Many of these classroom activities mirror those of the previously outlined methods described by Blaauw-Hara, and Ferris and Hedgcock. However, there are two areas in which they differ. The first area is the one-to-one conferencing, which we do more frequently and during which we often focus more time on syntax than on content. This observation should not be

interpreted as negative, however, because the EFL students often require more practice with the conventions of sentence structure than do either ESL or NS students. The second area of difference is the peer-to-peer group work. Group work in an EFL environment can be problematic because, with intermediate level students, for example, there may be some students who are quite competent with sentence structure, and other students who are quite weak. In addition, the EFL students' strengths in the L2 can vary unevenly across the four skills; speaking, listening, reading, and writing. Therefore, if an EFL writing course has students who are weak writers, but effective speakers, then peer-to-peer review work may be unproductive. On the other hand, if there are some very competent writers, then the peer-to-peer review work can be very successful. Over the years, SLA scholars such as Ferris and Hedgcock, as well as Zheng Lin (2013) have found that, as Lin argues, group work "brings everyone's potential into better play and could optimize the learning outcome through joint and mutual supportive efforts among team members" (p. 650). My experience implementing group work in my writing classrooms over the past 20 years also supports this observation. What I have witnessed is that EFL students benefit in equal measure with the NS and ESL students. In addition, the more experienced the students are with peer feedback, writing, and reading, the better they are at peer-to-peer feedback.

Examining the writing samples from EFL students in two writing courses in which students are either all beginning, or all intermediate level writers, we can see more clearly the effect of the process writing approach and peer-to-peer group work. The first two examples are from a writing intensive course for students in the Faculty of Dental Medicine. The course is a level one writing course that focuses on sentence structure, vocabulary, and paragraph writing skills. Activities in the course focus on writing assignments that develop skills in syntax such as descriptive, sequential, expressive, explanatory, etc. In addition, students are required to use the process approach in their writing assignments starting with brainstorming, then outlining, drafting, and revising

toward a final product. This group of students also met with their instructor for one-on-one conferences. The final products were not free of error, but the paragraphs were effective and demonstrated the student's unique expression and idea (see Table 1 below). As can be seen in the sample below, these process writing activities focusing on discrete sentence structures and paragraphing helped these students develop their ideas and focus, as well as their skills in English syntax.

Table 1: Sample of EFL student writing process

In the second group of writing samples, the course is a level two writing course for English majors. The course requires that students write several essays focusing on rhetorical modes. The essay writing activities in this class followed the process of brainstorm, outline, draft, peer-to-peer review, one-on-one teacher conference with revision comments, and then more peer-to-peer review, and the final product. During the peer-to-peer review work on the second draft of the sample shown, the peer comments focused on content and idea, but for the fourth draft, the peer-to-peer comments focused on grammar and word choice (see Table 2 below). What I noticed with these intermediate level students is that their peer-to-peer review work is beneficial to almost the same degree as with the ESL and NS students in the writing courses discussed previously. More importantly, peer-to-peer review work builds holistic literacy skills in the target language. These samples demonstrate that, as a learning strategy, the process writing method, with both peer-to-peer review and one-on-one teacher conferences produce effective writing products, help students develop greater communicative skills in the L2, and build student confidence in the target language.

Table 2: Sample of EFL Student Writing Process

1. First Handwritten Draft of Paragraph Two from Argument Essay for Level 2 EFL Writing Class

Counter-argument : Some Buddhists always change their name according to a superstition because they believe that their new name will bring luck and make their life better. It can also lead to success in love and money. Because of this superstition that some people succeed with their new name have told each other, nowadays other people decide to change their name more and more.

2. Second Draft from Peer-to-Peer Group Review

ᴵⁿ * Some Buddhists in Thailand always change their name according to a superstition

because they believe that their new name will bring luck and make their life better. It

can also lead to success in love and money. Because of this superstition that some

people succeed with their new name have told each other, nowadays other people

decide to change their name more and more.

3. Third draft from Instructor Review with Revision Comments (no grade assigned)

Some Buddhists in Thailand always change their name according to a

superstition because they believe that their new name will bring luck and make their

life better. It can also lead to success in love and money. Because of this superstition

that some people succeed with their new name have told each other, nowadays other

people decide to change their name more and more.

4. Fourth draft from Peer-to-Peer Group Review

Some Buddhists in Thailand always change their name according to a

superstition because they believe that their new name will bring luck and make their

life better. It can also lead to success in love and money. Because of this superstition

that some people have succeeded with their new name, many people today are

deciding to change their name.

5. Final Draft of Paragraph

Some Buddhists in Thailand always change their name according to a superstition
because they believe that their new name will bring luck and make their life better. It
can also lead to success in love and money. Because of this superstition that some
people have succeeded with their new name, many people today are deciding to change
their name.

Findings: Effective Learning Strategies for the EFL Writing Student

Returning to the initial questions stated in the Background
section about effective learning strategies from the process writing
method, teaching grammar and group work, and how two

pedagogies (process writing and whole language) from two fields (Composition and Rhetoric and SLA) intersect for the EFL environment, I provide answers for each in this section.

ELL and the Process Approach

As the surveys, observations, interview, and student samples here demonstrate, the process writing approach, with grammar taught in the context of a student's essay are just as effective for an EFL environment as they are for ESL and NS environments. Akiko's learning strategies, experiences, and successes with her L2 combined with the findings of the student surveys and sample writings suggest that, for ELL's at all levels and in all learning environments (ESL and EFL), a process writing approach with contextualized grammar instruction, an emphasis on re-vision work, peer-to-peer and one-on-one conferences is the most effective learning strategy.

Peer-to-Peer Group Work in an EFL Environment

This study also reveals that students perceive the effectiveness of these learning strategies somewhat differently from many composition teachers and researchers. For example, group work is not perceived as helpful, even though composition researchers have found that it is more effective than traditional lecture methods for developing writing skills. In addition, peer-to-peer group work in the EFL writing class has been found to be just as effective as it is in an NS or ESL writing class. As a learning strategy for building literacy skills, peer-to-peer review is effective in ways that are difficult to measure by quantitative means, but is, nonetheless, beneficial to the students.

One-on-one Conferences

Students and instructors agree, moreover, on the importance of one-on-one conferencing on essays and grammar rules. However, meeting the needs of our writing students with one-on-one conferencing in the classroom, in an instructor's

office, or at a Writing Center presents us with significant logistical problems, which I will address in the Discussion section below.

Error Correction

Many teachers already agree that, even for ELL's, teaching grammar and writing skills in the context of a student's own work is infinitely more effective than lectures on discrete and general rules. One reason for this is because, as with process writing pedagogy, it emphasizes learning to communicate effectively by developing skills in student initiated revision, proofreading and editing, and mastery of the dominant code of literacy, while providing meaningful and relatable learning experiences. In other words, it is more productive to teach a student a grammatical convention in the process of trying to communicate an idea, than through artificial and highly scripted examples and exercises in a textbook.

Discussion

Pedagogical Implications and Limitations: Redefining the Writing Classroom as a Writing Workshop

Even though one-on-one conferencing seems logistically impossible, it is not. One way we can fulfill one-on-one conferencing is in the classroom during peer-to-peer work. For example, the writer's workshop method of peer group work, which has been a dominant method of instruction in creative writing courses for decades, emphasizes focused and intensive time spent during class on one student's work in small groups, large groups, or as a whole class effort. In addition, a writer's workshop functions over an extended period of time. Such groups will spend an entire term working with only writers from their assigned group. The teacher and student peers may review the same writer's essay two or even three times over the course of the term. This intensive focus on one writer and his or her work over an extended period of time allows both the reviewers and the writers to grow and develop their reading and writing strategies in a cooperative community learning environment. In this classroom

model, the teaacher's role is as facilitator and guide through the review and revision process. Teacher's employing the Writer's Workshop model spend minimal time lecturing and maximum time working with students in groups or individually. The workshop model has been used effectively by other scholars as well, such as Anjeli Pandey who finds in her article "Rethinking Process-Based Writing Approaches in the ESOL Middle School Classroom: Developing Linguistic Fluency via Hybrid Pedagogies" (2012), that "individualized workshop configurations in the ESOL writing classroom, will in fact, trigger advanced writing fluency" (p. 659). Pandey further argues that we should rethink the teacher-fronted classrooms and calls for an "individual workshop configuration" for better addressing the specific and individualized errors and weaknesses of students (p. 690). As with the process writing approach, contextualized learning environments such as the writer's workshop tailored to individual student needs are not only a more effective form of teaching writing, but offer a more empowering learning environment.

In addition to renegotiating our assumptions about the physical classroom and the role of the teacher as either a workshop facilitator or lecturer of rhetorical and grammatical conventions, we also need to recognize the central place of Writing Centers and tutors in the needs of our students. As Patricia Friedrich explains in her article "Assessing the Needs of Linguistically Diverse First-Year Students: Bringing Together and Telling Apart International ESL, Resident ESL and Monolingual Basic Writers" (2006), the kind of one-on-one instruction such as is available in a Writing Center is central to providing effective instruction in writing for students at all skill levels. As she states, one reason the Writing Center and one-on-one instruction is so important is because "much of the difficulty relating to serving students of varying profiles has to do with finding time to service individual needs" (p. 29). Writing Centers offer an invaluable partnership for the instructor who knows that really addressing the surface errors of individual students must be done via one-on-

one conferences, but for whom providing that kind of time intensive instruction is often impossible.

Conclusion

The previous discussion illustrates that the process writing approach for all levels of writing courses provides the most effective learning strategy for our diverse ELL population. Most writing instructors already know that conferencing with a student elicits much more improvement in both the essay's content and syntax than do whole class lectures. This examination also may signal a shift in instructional methods for the writing courses in the EFL environments. We should incorporate more writing workshops, more one-on-one conferencing, and include Writing Centers in our programs. In short, we need to rethink our dependence on the teacher-centered lecture model and explicit grammar instruction if we want to help our students develop the necessary writing competence in a globalized world in which English dominates and in which there are many Englishes.

The Author

Dr. Rebecca Webb is Assistant Professor of English and TEFL at Rangsit University, Thailand. Dr. Webb has been teaching English and EFL for over 20 years and has published works in English pedagogy and theory. Her current research focuses on the teaching of literacy skills to ELLs in Thailand. She can be contacted at rkaewebb@gmail.com

References

Belanoff, P., & Dickson M. (1991) *Portfolios: Process and Product.* Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook.

Blaauw-Hara, M. (2006). "Why Our Students Need Instruction in Grammar, and How We Should Go about it." *English in the Two-Year College 34*, 165-78.

Bolton, K., Graddol, D., & Meierkord, C. (2011). "Towards Developmental World Englishes." *World Englishes 30(4*), 459-480.

Bria, R. & Jafari, S. (2013). "The Impact of Collaborative Writing on the Writing Fluency of Iranian EFL Learners." *Journal of Language Teaching and Research 4(1)*, 164-175.

Brown, H. D. (2001). *Teaching by Principles: An Interactive Approach to Language Pedagogy* (2nd ed.). White Plains, NY: Longman.

Brown, H. D. (2000). *Principles of Language Learning and Teaching* (4th ed.). Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall Regents.

Calderón, M., Slavin, R., & Sanchez, M. (2011). "Effective Instruction for English Learners." *The Future of Children: Immigrant Children 21(1)*,103-27.

CCCC, Executive Committee (2001). "CCCC Statement on Second Language Writing and Writers." *National Council of Teachers of English - Homepage.* NCTE. Web. 08 Feb. 2012. <http://www.ncte.org/cccc/resources/positions/secondlan gwriting>.

Elbow, P. (1973). *Writing without Teachers* (2nd ed.). New York: Oxford UP.

Elbow, P., & Belanoff, P. (1991). "SUNY: Portfolio-based evaluation program." In P. Connelly & T. Vilardi (Eds.), *New Methods in College Writing Programs* (pp. 96–105). New York: Modern Language Association.

Emig, J. (1971). *The Composing Practices of Twelfth Graders.* Urbana: NCTE.

Ferris, D., & Hedgcock, J. (2005). *Teaching ESL Composition Purpose, Process, and Practice* (2nd ed.). Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Flower, L. & Hayes, J. R. (1981). "A Cognitive Process Theory of Writing." *College Composition and Communication 32(4)*, 365-387.

Friedrich, P. (2006). "Assessing the Needs of Linguistically Diverse First-year Students: Bringing Together and Telling Apart International ESL, Resident ESL and Monolingual Basic Writers." *Writing Program Administration 29(3)*, 15-35.

Hamp-Lyons, L. (1996). "The Challenges of Second-Language Writing Assessment." In E. M. White, W. Lutz, & S. Kamusikiri (Eds.), *Assessment of Writing: Politics, Policies, Practices* (pp. 226-240). New York: Modern Language Association of America.

Harklau, L. (1994). "ESL versus Mainstream Classes: Contrasting L2 Learning Environments." *TESOL Quarterly 28(2)*, 241-72.

Krashen, S. D. (1985). *The Input Hypothesis: Issues and Implications*. London: Longman.

Kroll, B. (1993). "Teaching Writing IS Teaching Reading: Training the New Teacher of ESL Composition." In J. G. Carson, & I. Leki (Eds.), *Reading In the Composition Classroom: Second Language Perspectives* (pp. 61-81). Boston: Heinle.

Kroll, B. (1998). "Assessing Writing Abilities." *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics, 18*, 219-240.

Kroll, B. (2001). "Composition of a Life in Composition." In T. J. Silva & P. K. Matsuda (Eds.), *On Second Language Writing* (pp. 1-16). Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Kroll, B. (2001). "Considerations for Teaching an ESL/EFL Writing Course." In M. Celce-Murcia (Ed.), *Teaching English as a Second or Foreign Language* (3rd ed.) (pp. 219-232). Boston: Heinle.

Kroll, B., & Reid, J. (1994). "Guidelines For Designing Writing Prompts: Clarifications, Caveats, And Cautions." *Journal of Second Language Writing, 3*, 231-255.

Leung, C., & Safford, K. (2005). "Non-traditional Students in Higher Education: EAL and Literacies." In B. V. Street (Ed.), *Literacies Across Educational Contexts: Mediating Learning and Teaching* (pp. 303-324). Philadelphia: Caslon Publishers.

Lin, Z. (2013). "Capitalising on Learner Agency and Group Work in Learning Writing in English as a Foreign Language." *TESOL Journal 4.4*, 633-654.

Lunsford, A., & Lunsford, K. J. (2008). "Mistakes Are a Fact of Life: A National Comparative Study." *College Composition and Communication 59*, 181-206.

Ortmeier-Hooper, C. (2008). "English May Be My Second Language, but I'm Not ESL." *College Composition and Communication 59*, 389-419.

Pandey, A. (2012). "Rethinking Process-Based Writing Approaches in the ESOL Middle School Classroom: Developing Linguistic Fluency via Hybrid Pedagogies. *TESOL Journal 3.4*, 659-697.

Richey, D. K. (1997). "Community College/High School Feedback and Collaboration: Preventive Measures." In J. M. Ignash (Ed.), *Implementing Effective Policies for Remedial and Developmental Education* (pp. 63-72). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Seidlhofer, B. (2009). "Common Ground and Different Realities: World Englishes and English as a Lingua Franca." *World Englishes 28(2)*, 236-245.

Shaughnessy, M. P. (1977). *Errors and Expectations: A Guide for the Teacher of Basic Writing*. New York: Oxford UP.

Wei, Z. F., Shang, H. F., & Briody, P. (2012). "The Relationship between English Writing Ability Levels and EFL Learners' Metacognitive Behavior in the Writing Process." *International Journal of Academic Research in Progressive Education and Development 1(4)*, 154-180.

Xiao, R. (2009). "Multidimensional Analysis and the Study of World Englishes." *World Englishes 28(4)*, 421-450.

Yancey, K. B., & Weiser, I. (1997). *Situating Portfolios: Four Perspectives*. Logan, UT: Utah State UP.