ACADEMIC TEXT
AND TEACHING SECOND LANGUAGE WRITING

Chapters 1, 2, and 3 establish some of the groundwork for the book. Chapter 1 presents the main assumptions of the book, which may seem fairly obvious, but are often overlooked in the teaching of L2 writing: (1) Learning to write in an L2 is different from learning to write in an L1, so (2) teaching L2 writing the way L1 writing is taught is not effective. (3) The knowledge-transforming type of writing expected in academic disciplines is different from personal experience narratives or conversational discourse and cannot be developed through conversational or interactional activities—whether written or spoken. On the contrary, (4) extensive, thorough, and focused instruction in L2 academic vocabulary, grammar, and discourse is essential for developing L2 written proficiency.

More groundwork is covered in chapter 2, which discusses writing requirements in a university, characteristics of academic writing and academic text, as well as common writing tasks students need to perform in their mainstream studies in particular disciplines in the university.

Chapter 3 examines the importance of accuracy in academic writing and how to approach the teaching of NNS writing so that accuracy can be achieved.
The Importance of Text in Written Academic Discourse: Ongoing Goals in Teaching ESL Skills

OVERVIEW

- NNS academic writing skills in English.
- Key assumptions of the book and support for the assumptions.

In the past several decades, the proliferation of college- and university-level courses, textbooks, and all manner of learning aids for second language (L2) academic writers has become a fact of life that most English as a Second Language (ESL), English for Academic Purposes (EAP), and writing teachers have had no choice but notice. The rapid rise in the number of L2 teacher-training courses, workshops, and MA-level programs in TESL (Teaching English as a Second Language) has also become commonplace in U.S. education.

The emergence of L2 writing courses, teacher-training programs, and textbooks is not particularly surprising given college/university enrollment statistics. During the 2000–2001 school year, approximately 547,867 international students were enrolled in degree programs in U.S. colleges and universities (i.e., 4% of the entire student population; Institute of International Education, 2001). In addition, U.S. intensive and preparatory programs teach ESL and EAP skills, including writing, to another 866,715 L2 learners, some of whom return to their home countries, but many of whom seek admission to institutions of higher learning.

In addition, U.S. colleges enroll almost 1,800,000 immigrant students—that is, 6% of all students (U.S. Census, October 2000). Together international and immigrant students represent about 10% of all college and university enrollees in the United States. In the next 4 years or so, a large pro-
portion of the current 3 million immigrant high school students (up from approximately 2.3 million at the time of the 1990 U.S. Census) are expected to continue their education in U.S. colleges and universities.

ACADEMIC WRITING SKILLS IN ENGLISH

In the past two decades, a number of publications have emerged to point out that, despite having studied English as well as academic writing in English in their native and English-speaking countries, non-native speaking students experience a great deal of difficulty in their studies at the college and university level in English-speaking countries (Hinkel, 2002a; Johns, 1997; Johnson 1989a; Jordan, 1997; Leki & Carson, 1997; Prior, 1998; Santos, 1988). These and other researchers have identified important reasons that the academic writing of even highly advanced and trained NNS students continues to exhibit numerous problems and shortfalls.

For instance, Johns (1997) found that many NNS graduate and undergraduate students, after years of ESL training, often fail to recognize and appropriately use the conventions and features of academic written prose. She explained that these students produce academic papers and essays that faculty perceive to be vague and confusing, rhetorically unstructured, and overly personal. In the view of many faculty Johns interviewed, NNS students’ writing lacks sentence-level features considered to be basic—for example, appropriate uses of hedging, modal verbs, pronouns, active and passive voice (commonly found in texts on sciences), balanced generalizations, and even exemplification. As an outcome of the faculty views of the NNSs’ overall language and particularly writing skills, many NNS university students experience frustration and alienation because they often believe the faculty to be unreasonably demanding and exclusive and their own best efforts unvalued and unrecognized (Johns, 1997).

Information regarding the high failure rate among NNS students in various U.S. colleges and universities abounds. For instance, dropout rates among foreign-born college students are more than twice that of students born in the United States (U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, 1995). Similarly, analyses of student enrollment data carried out in many large universities in Pennsylvania, California, and New York, as well universities in other states, attribute the dropout rate among NNS students, even at the PhD level, directly to the shortcomings in their academic English skills (Asian American Federation of New York, 2001; Hargreaves, 2001).

The effectiveness of ESL and EAP writing courses in preparing NNS students for actual academic writing in universities was discussed by Leki and

---

1Hedging refers to the uses of particles, words, phrases, or clauses to reduce the extent of the writer’s responsibility for the extent and truth value of statements, show hesitation or uncertainty, and display politeness and indirectness. Hedging in academic writing is discussed in detail in chapter 12.
Carson (1997). They found that, "what is valued in writing for writing classes is different from what is valued in writing for other academic courses" (p. 64). Leki and Carson further emphasized that the teaching of writing in ESL and EAP programs needs to provide students with linguistic and writing skills that can enable the learners to "encounter, manage, and come to terms with new information" and expand their knowledge base. Other researchers such as Chang and Swales (1999) investigated specific discourse and sentence-level writing skills of highly advanced NNS students. These authors indicate that even in the case of advanced and highly literate NNSs, exposure to substantial amounts of reading and experience with writing in academic contexts does not ensure their becoming aware of discourse and sentence-level linguistic features of academic writing and the attainment of the necessary writing skills. Chang and Swales concluded that explicit instruction in advanced academic writing and text is needed.

A large number of extensive and detailed studies carried out since 1990 have demonstrated that mere exposure to L2 vocabulary, grammar, discourse, and formal written text is not the most effective means of attaining academic L2 proficiency (e.g., Ellis, 1990; Hinkel, 2002a; Nation, 2001; Norris & Ortega, 2000; Schmitt, 2000).

Since the early 1980s, the predominant method of instruction in the teaching of L2 writing has remained focused on the writing process similar to the pedagogy adopted in L1 writing instruction for native speakers of English (Johns, 1990a; Reid, 1993; Zamel, 1982, 1983). The process-centered instructional methodology for teaching writing focuses on invention, creating ideas, and discovering the purpose of writing (Reid, 1993). Within the process-centered paradigm for teaching L2 writing, student writing is evaluated on the quality of prewriting, writing, and revision. Because the product of writing is seen as secondary to the writing process, and even inhibitory in the early stages of writing, issues of L2 grammar, lexis, and errors are to be addressed only as needed in the context of writing, and L2 writers with proficiency levels higher than beginning are exposed to text and discourse to learn from them and, thus, acquire L2 grammar and lexis naturally.

On the other hand, outside L2 writing and English composition courses, the evaluations of the quality of NNSs' L2 writing skills by faculty in the disciplines and general education courses has continued to focus on the product of writing (Hinkel, 2002a; Johns, 1997; Santos, 1988). In academic courses such as history, sociology, business, or natural sciences at both the undergraduate and graduate levels, evaluations of NNS students' academic skills are determined by their performance on traditional product-oriented language tasks—most frequently reading and writing (Ferris & Hedgcock, 1998; Johns, 1997; Leki & Carson, 1997; see also chap. 2). However, outside ESL and English department writing programs, the faculty in the disci-
plines are not particularly concerned about the writing process that affects (or does not affect) the quality of the writing product (i.e., students' assignments and papers that the professors read, evaluate, and grade; Dudley-Evans & St. John, 1998; Horowitz, 1986a; Johns, 1981, 1997; Jordan, 1997). The skills required for NNS students to succeed in mainstream general education courses, as well as those in the disciplines, have remained largely unchanged despite the shift in the writing instruction methodology.

Similarly, the assessment of L2 writing skills by ESL professionals on standardized and institutional placement testing has largely remained focused on the writing product without regard to the writing process (ETS, 1996; MELAB, 1996; Vaughan, 1991). The disparity between the teaching methods adopted in L2 writing instruction and evaluation criteria of the quality of L2 writing has produced outcomes that are damaging and costly for most ESL students, who are taught brainstorming techniques and invention, prewriting, drafting, and revising skills, whereas their essential linguistic skills, such as academic vocabulary and formal features of grammar and text, are only sparsely and inconsistently addressed.

KEY ASSUMPTIONS

In this book, teaching techniques and approaches to teaching L2 writing to academically bound NNS students are based on four key assumptions about learning to write in an L2.

(1) Learning to write in an L2 is fundamentally different from learning to write in an L1. NS writers already have highly developed (native) language proficiency in English, whereas most NNSs must dedicate years to learning it as a second language—in most cases as adults. To date research has not determined whether a majority of NNS students in colleges and universities can succeed in attaining native-like English proficiency even after years of intensive study that includes exposure to English-language interaction, text, and discourse.

(2) Research has established that applying the writing and composition pedagogy for NSs to teaching L2 writing to NNSs—even over the course of several years—does not lead to sufficient improvements in L2 writing to enable NNS students to produce academic-level text requisite in the academy in English-speaking countries (Hinkel, 2002b; Johns, 1997; Silva, 1993).

(3) The knowledge-telling and knowledge-transforming model of the writing process developed by Bereiter and Scardamalia (1985, 1987, 1989) stipulates that exposure to conversational language experi-
ences and access to written text apply to practically all language users. However, proficiency in L2 conversational linguistic features, familiarity with L2 writing, and “telling” what one already knows in written form do not lead to producing cognitively complex academic writing that relies on obtaining and “transforming” knowledge (i.e., logically organizing information and employing linguistic features and style that attend to audience expectations and the genre).

(4) Extensive, thorough, and focused instruction in L2 academic vocabulary, grammar, and discourse is essential for developing the L2 written proficiency expected in general education courses and studies in the disciplines.

These assumptions are based on a large body of research, some examples of which are cited next.

Assumption 1: Unlike Learning to Write in an L1, Learning to Write in an L2 First Requires an Attainment of Sufficient L2 Linguistic Proficiency

In the past several decades, studies of L2 learning and acquisition have shown that, although the rate of L2 learning and acquisition depends on many complex factors, adult learners’ ultimate attainment of L2 proficiency does not become native-like even after many years of exposure to L2 usage in L2 environments (Bialystok, 2001; Celce-Murcia, 1991; d’Anglejan, 1990; Dietrich, Klein, & Noyau, 1995; Larsen-Freeman, 1993; Larsen-Freeman & Long, 1991; Schmidt, 1983). Other researchers have distinguished between advanced academic language proficiency and basic conversational and communication proficiency necessary to engage in daily interactions (Bratt Paulston, 1990; Cummins, 1979; Schachter, 1990). Conversational fluency does not carry with it the skills necessary for the production of academic text.


²Because this chapter establishes much of the theoretical groundwork for the book, a large number of references are necessary. The author promises, however, that the rest of the book will not be as reference heavy as this chapter.
A large number of studies have also established that learning to write in a
second language and, in particular, learning to write the formal L2 aca-
demic prose crucial in NNSs' academic and professional careers requires
the development of an advanced linguistic foundation, without which
learners simply do not have the range of lexical and grammar skills re-
quired in academic writing (Berkenkotter & Huckin, 1995; Bizzell, 1982;
Byrd & Reid, 1998; Chang & Swales, 1999; Grabe & Kaplan, 1996;
Hamp-Lyons, 1991a, 1991b; Hinkel, 1999a, 2002a; Horowitz, 1986a,
1979; Nation, 1990, 2001; Nation & Waring, 1997; Ostler, 1980; Paltridge,
2001; Poole, 1991; Raimes, 1983, 1993; Read, 2000; Santos, 1984, 1988;
Swales, 1971).

Assumption 2: Writing Pedagogy for NSs with Highly Developed
(Native) Language Proficiency, Which NNSs
(By Definition) Do Not Have, Is Not Readily
Applicable to L2 Writing Instruction

Prior to the 1980s, the teaching of university-level rhetoric and composi-
tion was predominantly concerned with analyzing literature and the stu-
dents' writing style, lexical precision and breadth, grammar, and
rhetorical structure (e.g., the presence of thesis and rhetorical support, co-
herence, and cohesion). The teaching and evaluation of student writing
focused almost exclusively on the product of writing without explicit in-
struction of how high-quality writing could be attained. In reaction to
rigid and somewhat restrictive views of stylistic quality and evaluations of
writing, L1 methodologies for teaching writing and composition began to
move away from a focus on the product of composing, classical rhetorical
formality, study of literature, and accepted standards for grammatical ac-
curacy (Hairston, 1982). Instead the humanistic teaching of composition
began to emphasize the writing process with a reduced emphasis on rhe-
torical structure, vocabulary, and grammar.

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, some specialists in the teaching of L1
basic writing observed that a number of similarities exist among the strate-
gies used by basic NS and NNS writers. Therefore, they concluded that if
the writing behaviors of both types of writers exhibit similarities, the ap-
proaches to teaching writing to NSs can be applied to the teaching of NNSs.
Although at that time the research on the applicability of L1 writing peda-
gogy to learning to write in L2 consisted of only a small number of case stud-
ies and student self-reports, the methodology for teaching basic L1 writers
took hold in the teaching of NNSs. Following the methodological shift in L1
writing pedagogy, the process-centered paradigm was similarly adopted as
the preeminent methodology in teaching L2 writing (i.e., in L2 instruction
focused on the process of writing, the quality of writing is evaluated based
on prewriting, drafting, and revising; Reid, 1993). The process methodology further presupposes that issues of L2 grammar and lexis are to be addressed only as needed in the context of writing, and that if NNSs with proficiency levels higher than beginning are exposed to text and discourse to learn from, they will acquire L2 grammar and lexis naturally. Teaching ESL writing through the writing process and revising multiple drafts also permitted many ESL practitioners to hope that over time, as L2 writers developed and matured, their L2 errors and concerns about linguistic accuracy in grammar and vocabulary use would decrease (Zamel, 1982, 1983).

Another reason for the enormous popularity of process instruction for NNSs lies in the fact that the teaching of LI writing relied on the research and experience of the full-fledged and mature discipline of rhetoric and composition. Theoretically, the teaching of the writing process allowed ESL teachers and curriculum designers to accomplish their instructional goals based on solid research findings and pedagogical frameworks (Leki, 1995), which were developed, however, for a different type of learners.

In addition, because many ESL practitioners were trained in methodologies for teaching the writing process, employing these approaches, techniques, and classroom activities entailed working with known and familiar ways of teaching.

However, the new instructional methodology centered squarely and almost exclusively on the writing process that fundamentally overlooked the fact that NNS writers may simply lack the necessary language skills (e.g., vocabulary and grammar) to take advantage of the benefits of writing process instruction. Furthermore, the process methodology for teaching focused disproportionately on only the first of three components that are essential to produce good academic writing: (1) the process of writing with self-revision and editing, (2) formal rhetorical organization, and (3) quality of language (e.g., grammatical and lexical accuracy). In addition, although the methodologies for teaching L2 writing changed, in the academic arena assessment of student writing has remained focused on the end product without regard to the writing process required to arrive at the end product.

**Differences Between LI and L2 Writing**

The differences between LI and L2 writing are so extensive that they can be identified in practically all aspects of written text and discourse. According to numerous studies of LI and L2 written discourse and text, distinctions between them extend to:

- discourse and rhetorical organization
- ideas and content of writing
- rhetorical modes (e.g., exposition, narration, and argumentation)
- reliance on external knowledge and information
• references to sources of knowledge and information
• assumptions about the reader's knowledge and expectations (e.g., references to assumed common knowledge and familiarity with certain classical works)
• the role of audience in discourse and text production, as well as the appraisal of the expected discourse and text complexity (e.g., reader vs. writer responsible text)
• discourse and text cohesion

In addition to numerous studies of the L1 and L2 writing product, other studies have identified fundamental and substantial differences between approaches to writing and writing processes in L1 and L2 (Jones, 1985; Jourdenais, 2001; Widdowson, 1983). For instance, Raimes (1994) reported that although writing ability in an L1 is closely linked to fluency and conventions of expository discourse, L2 writing requires a developed L2 proficiency, as well as writing skills that pertain to the knowledge of discourse conventions and organizing the information flow. Similarly, Cumming's (1994) empirical study pointed out that L2 proficiency and expertise in writing are in fact two "psychologically" different skills; as individuals gain L2 proficiency, "they become better able to perform in writing in their second language, producing more effective texts" (p. 201), and attend to larger aspects of their writing production. He further underscored that L2 proficiency adds to and enhances L2 writing expertise.

An extensive study by Warden (2000) found that "implementing a multiple-stage process" of draft revising in writing pedagogy represents a mismatch with the reality of "social, cultural, and historical trends" (p. 607) in non-Western countries, where the emphasis is placed on vocabulary and grammar accuracy rather than revising one's writing for meaning and content. In his study, over 100 Taiwanese students revised multiple drafts, showing that redrafting essays results in generally unproductive writing strategies, such as correcting incremental phrase-level errors. Warden also
pointed out that "direct application of multiple drafts and non-sentence-level feedback" results in a lower level of student motivation for revision and "increased dependence of reference material," when students simply copy directly from sources.

Silva's (1993) survey of NNS writing research includes 72 empirical studies published between 1980 and 1991. He concluded that, "in general, compared to NS writing, L2 writers' texts were less fluent (fewer words), less accurate (more errors), and less effective (lower holistic scores) ... and ... exhibited less lexical control, variety, and sophistication overall" (p. 668). Silva summarized his research overview by stating that, "the research comparing L1 and L2 writing ... strongly suggests that ... they are different in numerous and important ways. This difference needs to be acknowledged and addressed by those who deal with L2 writers if these writers are to be treated fairly, taught effectively, and thus, given an equal chance to succeed in their writing-related personal and academic endeavors" (p. 668).

Assumption 3: Writing Personal Narratives/Opinions ("Telling" What One Already Knows) Is Not Similar to Producing Academic Writing, Which Requires Obtaining and Transforming Knowledge

In their examination of the writing process, Bereiter and Scardamalia (1985, 1987, 1989) distinguished two types of writing: knowledge telling and knowledge transforming. They explained that "telling" about personal experiences or opinions represents the easiest form of writing production that is accessible to practically all language users, who often perform such tasks in conversations. For example, writing assignments such as My first day in the United States, My most embarrassing/happiest day, or My views on abortion/animal research do not require writers to do much beyond telling what they already know and simply writing down their memories or opinions in response to the prompt. To produce an essay, writers need to organize information, often in a chronological order, according to a form appropriate within the structure of composition and in accordance with a few prescribed conventions for discourse organization (e.g., overt topic markers and/or lists of reasons—my first reason, the second reason, the third reason, ... in conclusion ...) that are also retrieved from memory. In the case of L2 students, such writing tasks can be produced even within the constraints of limited vocabulary and grammar because the degree of textual simplicity or complexity demonstrated in the writing is determined by the writer.

Opinion essays (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1987) include only two main elements: statement of belief and reason. Some assignments of this type may involve multiple reasons and, at slightly more advanced levels of writing, anticipation of counterarguments, as is often expected of ESL writers in L2 writing instruction dealing with what is often called written arguments (Leki,
Opinion writing also necessitates knowledge telling because stating one's views requires little information beyond the writer's personal beliefs or thoughts. In these types of essays, writers can produce text on practically any topic within their available knowledge without external information or support. Opinion-based written assignments or essays report personal thoughts in the form of a simple discourse organization that usually meets the expectations of the genre.

It is important to note that the teaching of L2 writing focuses predominantly on topics purposely designed to be accessible for L2 learners. Writing prompts in many L2 writing classes are often highly predictable and may actually require students to produce personal narratives and experiences (e.g., *why I want to study in the United States, holidays in my country, the person who influenced me most, my family, my favorite sport/pet/book/movie/class/teacher/relative*). Opinion essays are also ubiquitous at high intermediate and advanced levels of pre-university ESL/EAP instruction because they appear to be pseudoacademic and are based on short readings: *Please read the article/text and give your reaction/response to (its content on) pollution/gender differences/racial discrimination/the homeless/urban crime/TV advertising/teenage smoking/human cloning/gays/women in the military.* However, a counterproductive outcome of topic accessibility is that NNS academically bound students have few opportunities to engage in cognitively and linguistically advanced types of academic writing expected of them in their university-level courses (Leki & Carson, 1997).

In addition to knowledge telling in writing, the Bereiter and Scardamalia model of writing also addresses a far more psychologically complex type of writing that they called knowledge transforming. Knowledge transforming necessitates thinking about an issue, obtaining the information needed for analysis, and modifying one's thinking. This type of writing leads writers to expand their knowledge base and develop new knowledge by processing new information obtained for the purpose of writing on a topic. Knowledge transforming is considerably more cognitively complex than knowledge telling because writers do not merely retrieve information already available to them in memory, but derive it from reading and integrate with that already available to become obtained knowledge.

Bereiter and Scardamalia emphasized that knowledge telling and knowledge transforming require different rhetorical and text-generating skills for producing written discourse. Such important considerations of writing as content integration, expectations of the audience, conventions and form of the genre, use of language and linguistic features (e.g., lexis and grammar), logic of the information flow, and rhetorical organization are all intertwined in knowledge transforming (e.g., defining terms, explaining ideas, and clarifying). In general terms, Bereiter and Scardamalia described the classical academic model of writing expected in the disciplines when students are required to obtain, synthesize, integrate, and analyze information
from various sources, such as published materials, textbooks, or laboratory experiments.

Advanced cognitive and information-processing tasks entailed in transforming knowledge and demonstrating knowledge in writing place great demands on L2 writers' language skills.

**Assumption 4: Intensive and Consistent Instruction in L2 Vocabulary and Grammar, as Well as Discourse Organization, Is Paramount for Academically Bound NNSs**


For instance, Laufer and Nation (1995) identified significant positive correlations between learners' gains on vocabulary tests based on Nation's (1990) University Word List (see also chaps. 5, 8, and 9) and the increase of academic vocabulary in the compositions written by the same group of learners. Similarly, Laufer (1994) reported that persistent instruction in L2 vocabulary increases learners' vocabulary range in writing to include the foundational university-level vocabulary and progress beyond it. However, Nation (2001) cautioned that productive knowledge of vocabulary requires more learning and greater motivation for learning than receptive knowledge, in which effective and measurable gains can be made within a matter of days.\(^3\)


---

\(^3\)As research has confirmed, it follows from this observation that vocabulary teaching can result in improvements in L2 reading comprehension earlier than in the increased quality of writing production (Huckin, Haynes, & Coady, 1993; Nation, 2001).

A recent study by Norris and Ortega (2000) undertook probably the most comprehensive analysis of published data on the value of grammar instruction. These authors stated that in many cases it is not easy to tell whether communicative, explicit, or meaning-focused instruction led to greater degrees of L2 learning and acquisition because of the disparate sample sizes and statistical analyses employed in various research studies and publications. Thus, to make sense of research findings published in the past two decades, Norris and Ortega standardized the results of 49 studies on L2 learning, acquisition, and grammar instruction. The outcomes of their substantial undertaking show clearly that in L2 teaching, “focused instructional treatments of whatever sort far surpass non- or minimally focused exposure to the L2” (p. 463).

It is important to emphasize that the purpose of this book is not to enable teachers to help students attain the skills necessary to become sophisticated writers of fiction or journalistic investigative reports. The narrow and instrumental goal of instruction presented here deals with helping NNS writers become better equipped for their academic survival.

Furthermore, outside of a brief nod in chapter 11, the contents of the book do not include the teaching of the macro (discourse) features of academic writing, such as introductions, thesis statements, body paragraphs, and conclusions. Dozens of other books on the market, for both teachers and students, address the organization of information in academic and student essays according to the norms and conventions of academic writing in English.

Although both discourse- and text-level features play a crucial role in teaching L2 writing, the curriculum and teaching techniques discussed in this book focus primarily on lexical, syntactic, and rhetorical features of academic text. The importance of these features in text and discourse serve as the organizing principle for instruction, narrowly targeting their pedagogical utility. Whenever possible, variations in the uses of the features across such different disciplines as business, economics, psychology, or sociology are discussed throughout the volume.

This book presents a compendium of many practical teaching techniques, strategies, and tactics that a teacher can use in writing and composition classes to help students improve the quality of their academic text. These include the teaching of phrase and sentence patterns that are commonly found in academic writing and can be taught in chunks. The teaching of academic nouns and verbs in the book centers around the basic core vocabulary students must learn to produce writing more lexically advanced than can be attained by means of exposure to spoken interactions and the conversational register. In addition, the material in this book covers the textual and discourse functions of such important features of academic writing.
as essential verb tenses, passive voice, and necessary main and subordinate clauses, as well as adjectives, adverbs, hedges, and pronouns.

FURTHER READINGS ABOUT WRITTEN ACADEMIC TEXT AND DISCOURSE, AND TEACHING ACADEMIC ESL WRITING

L2 Written Academic Text and Discourse

Teaching Academic ESL Writing


