TEACHING WRITING TO ENGLISH SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNERS

Laura Dison

A Research Report Submitted to the Faculty of Education,
University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, in partial
fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of Master of
Education.

Johannesburg, 1989

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ABSTRACT

Learning to write is a complex process that students
struggle with, particularly those studying through the medium
of English as a second language. This research report is an
exploration of how the sub-skills of writing are dealt with
from differing theoretical perspectives. Research in the
teaching of writing has been increasingly student-centred
and focuses attention on writing as a recursive process in
which planning, structuring, reading, revising and editing
take place throughout the whole task. In line with this
tendency, the research report aims to evolve an approach to
the teaching of writing which synthesises the strengths of
current paradigms for the teaching of writing. The synthesis
approach is applied to an analysis of TELIP (Teachers'
English Language Improvement Programme) writing materials in
an attempt to determine its effectiveness as an analytic
tool.

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this research report is my own work
and that I have given acknowledgement to sources which I
have used. It has not been submitted before for any degree
or examination in any other University.

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27th day of *February*, 1989.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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ABBREVIATIONS

D.E.T.	Department of Education and Training
E.S.L.	English as a Second Language
SELRP	Soweto English Language Research Programme
T.E.D.	Transvaal Education Department
TELIP	Teachers' English Language Improvement Programme

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LIST OF EXTRACTS

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

This research report aims to explore the different factors
involved in the process of writing in a way that provides
pointers for the teaching of writing in English second
language contexts. South African students' written competence
in a second language falls far behind their oral fluency. One
of the reasons for this is that writing demands a whole new
set of cognitive strategies which are not required in the
production of oral language (Vygotsky, 1978). Oral language is
not expected to be as grammatically correct or as structured
as written language. In schools, students often write just as
they speak and are then bewildered to find that there are
different requirements for oral and written language. There
are, nevertheless, other reasons for the discrepancy between
students' spoken and written abilities, particularly in terms
of the macro and micro-contexts that govern the teaching of
writing in the South African context.

The teaching and learning of anything including writing does
not exist in a vacuum and one has to understand broader issues

in order to come to grips with the process involved in learning to write. This involves an understanding of the workings of the segregated system of schooling. The Bantu Education Act, implemented in 1954, was designed to control all schooling for blacks and to prevent black aspirations above certain forms of labour.

The state was able to create an education system that was "well able to serve the needs of capitalist reproduction in the 1960s and 1970s" (Hyslop, 1985: 18). Despite the restructuring of education in the 1980's to meet industry's needs for numerate and literate semi-skilled machine operatives, managers and skilled workers, the unequal distribution of resources remains a feature of Apartheid education.

Black schools often lack basic facilities such as duplicating machines, books, electricity, playing fields and building space (Janks, 1988). Education departments impose restrictions and prescribe teachers' programmes almost entirely. Teachers are often victims of inadequate teacher training colleges and have difficulty doing much more than transmitting "knowledge" for regular regurgitation in examinations,

> Bantu Education has not provided teachers with the English language skills necessary to teach in a second language...and, as a result, teachers are feeling ill-equipped and uncertain about what they are supposed to do in classrooms...other problems such as no reading matter - even for the teachers in some cases, huge classes (often over 60), low salaries and lack of teaching aids don't make their task any lighter (SELRP, 1982: 10).

Because of the complexities of the writing process, writing
across the curriculum is a fundamental language skill that is
either ignored or totally marginalised in many learning contexts.
Hartshorne (1987) demonstrates how both language policy and
teaching practice have reduced the "capacity to use English in
the classroom at a level appropriate to the learning required
by the curriculum" (Hartshorne, 1987: 77). Since the 1976
Soweto uprising, which was sparked off by the use of Afrikaans
as the medium of instruction, a change of language policy has
been implemented. Mother-tongue is the medium for the first
four years of primary education after which parents may choose
English or Afrikaans as the medium of instruction (Janks,
1988). Hartshorne points out that there is "little likelihood
of African pupils being able to benefit from an effective
English-medium education as long as separate, vertically
segmented, racial education systems are maintained"
(Hartshorne, 1987: 78).

It is also necessary to examine factors within writing itself
that determine the parameters of how and what one writes. For
example, writing purpose is crucial in determining the writing
process. "Decisions about what information to include, how to
structure and verbalise it, even what format to use -- are
strategic, shaped to some significant extent by the
communicative context" (Coe, 1986: 293). However, in current
practice in the teaching of writing in schools there is little
consideration of writing purpose, audience and occasion.
Students may be given no choice in the selection of topics and

structure is often prescribed for them.

This research report argues that in spite of the effects of both macro and micro-contexts on the teaching of writing, it is still possible to develop alternative strategies for use in the classroom. It is important to note that both education and language policies have been shaped to some extent by the "crisis" in education, or the contradictions that have "flawed the system of schooling's smooth functioning" (Molteno, 1980: 60). Resistance by teachers and students has been a constant challenge to state education. The various strategies on the part of progressive teachers and students need to be understood as part of a much more creative process in which educational and social systems are being transformed. As Willis has remarked,

> Cultural production is the process of the collective creative use of discourses, meanings, materials, practices and group processes to explore, understand and creatively occupy particular positions, relations and sets of material possibilities (Willis, 1981: 58).

This research report, in exploring alternative approaches to the teaching of writing, wishes to avoid falling into the trap of reducing learning to "narrow technical dimensions" and promoting the "methodological madness" characteristic of curriculum development (Aronowitz, 1986: 133). While there is merit in looking at techniques or tools which challenge current educational practices, these tools are insufficient in

themselves for promoting substantial educational change. "In
the identification of the problem as one of (skill) there has
developed a tendency to degrade writing to its functional
boundaries, instead of seeing it as an expressive and
intellectual process" (Aronowitz, 1986: 52). There is a need
for unity of content and method to overcome the
compartmentalised and technicist notion of writing in schools.

The aim of this research report is to evolve an approach to
the teaching of writing which synthesises the strengths of
current and opposing paradigms for the teaching of writing.
This is based on the belief that it is possible to make
writing accessible to students both in a mother tongue and in
an E.S.L. context so that they have the opportunity to develop
new strategies required for the writing process and for
learning in general. Besides the practical value of writing
for social and political purposes, students will have greater
control over their thought processes across a variety of
experiences and backgrounds. Students who master writing in
English as a second language will in addition be able to
communicate with a wider audience.

Two theoretical approaches have emerged which are central to
much of the discussion about writing. These two paradigms
involve both first and second language English teaching. But
it appears that research on second language teaching is more
limited with regard to the teaching of writing as many E.S.L.
teachers are inclined to "retreat from English writing as an

instructional activity and to focus instead on spelling,
vocabulary and grammar" (Ammon, 1985: 66).

The first paradigm, a traditional product approach, tends to
limit the teaching of writing to "conventions and mechanics of
discourse" (Freedman, 1983: 180). According to Connor (1987),
this product-centred paradigm stresses "expository writing,
makes style the most important element in writing, and
maintains that the writing process is linear, determined by
writers before they start to write" (Connor, 1987: 677). The
second paradigm focuses on the process of writing itself with
a shift away from viewing the composition as a product whose
properties are analysed in terms of style, organisation and
rules of usage.

> The process-centered paradigm...focuses on writing
> processes; teaches strategies for invention and
> discovery; considers audience, purpose and context
> of writing; emphasises recursiveness in the writing
> process; and distinguishes between aims and mode of
> discourse (Connor, 1987: 677).

Chapter Two will examine the product and process approaches
separately because they do reflect differing theoretical and
methodological assumptions with regard to learning as a whole.
The following aspects of writing will be explored in both of
the paradigms: planning, grammar, error, structure, models,
methods of assessment as well as function and audience. It
must be stressed, however, that the intention of this research
report is not to reinforce the product/process dichotomy.

These approaches do not exist in mutual exclusion and there will be areas of overlap in their conceptions of the teaching of writing.

Chapter Three will argue that after acknowledging the fundamental differences between product and process approaches, the way forward is to develop the possibility of a synthesis which reinforces the advantageous aspects of each paradigm. This is in agreement with Zamel's proposal (1987) that a balance be made between engaging students in a process-oriented classroom and preparing them for course requirements (finished products). Connor (1987) has argued that an integrative theory will explore the role of product less critically, as it has been through the analysis of products themselves that writing processes have been developed. In Chapter Three, the same elements of writing will be dealt with as in the previous chapter but this time in terms of a synthesis.

Chapter Four will examine one project's approach to the teaching of writing in order to see how it is located in terms of the product-process paradigms. This analysis of the materials of TELIP (Teachers' English Language Improvement Programme) will determine to what extent the synthesis approach can provide useful insights into the teaching of writing. Chapter Four will attempt to consolidate some of the theoretical and methodological issues that have emerged in earlier chapters by looking critically at an existing writing programme.

CHAPTER TWO

2   AN ANALYSIS OF PRODUCT AND PROCESS PARADIGMS

2.1 Historical background to the emergence of the two writing

    paradigms

It is necessary to study how the functions of writing have
developed chronologically to provide a backdrop for the
analysis of different elements of writing within the product
and process paradigms. There have been many classifications of
types of writing, all of which derive from various intentions
of the author. A frequently-occuring distinction is one
between narrative, descriptive, expository and argumentative
writing. Perera (1984) has pointed out that a weakness of
these descriptive categories is that they do not actually
reveal the "developmental processes in children's writing"
(Perera, 1984: 216).

In an attempt to overcome this problem, and to emphasise
the developmental role of language, The Schools Council
Writing Project (Britton et al, 1975) suggest that
writing be viewed as a continuum ranging from Transactional
writing at one end to Poetic writing at the other,
with their roots traced to Expressive writing at the
centre of the system. Expressive writing is seen as the type
of writing closest to the writer's thinking processes and is

described as "exploratory, tentative, sometimes fragmented" (Freedman, 1983: 72). The other two categories are seen to develop out of Expressive writing. Transactional writing is used to "get things done in the real world", that is, to "report, communicate, inform, persuade" (Freedman, 1983: 184). Poetic writing, on the other hand, is something that "exists for its own sake" and serves as an art form.

In this continuum, the functions and audiences of different pieces of writing were made central, as a way of "distinguishing between writings of different kinds and of marking out the territory of the maturing writer's competence" (Burgess in Chorney, 1985: 53). Britton found that most school writing assignments failed to encourage students to imagine real writing situations. Thus ways were sought for widening the range of functions and audiences of writing tasks and to tap students' potential for genuine expressive writing.

There have been a number of criticisms of the School's Council Project, which was set up to investigate development in children's written abilities. Bereiter (1978) warns against an approach which associates stages of cognitive development with particular age levels. Adult learners may also be arrested in an egocentric stage and they may lapse into personal narrative in writing situations that demand abstract discourse. Another difficulty with this approach is that there is not enough overlap or merging of the major functions. Two distinctive functions can be combined and mutually influence each other, for example, in polemic poetry.

A major criticism of this model has been in terms of its
undertheorisation of people as social agents living in history
and it criticises the tendency to abstract students from their
own social histories by providing new contexts for language
learning and personal growth. Medway (1986) has highlighted
the "striking omissions" of approach's to writing in which the
zone of everyday existence such as the workplace, the social
life of the locality, leisure sites etc. are absent (Medway,
1986: 53). He stresses that students' own social realities are
not penetrated in any significant way, the focus being on
"fiction based arguments" and the imaginary world of the
conventional genres. Medway goes on to say that even in
relation to everyday experience, the primary focus in writing
remains a personal one as students are engaged in tasks which
concentrate on individual responses as opposed to social ones.

In an English as a second language context, research carried
out in classroom settings has begun to highlight the
importance of contextual factors on the development of
writing.

> Without taking into account who our students are and
> what their lives are like, we cannot hope to bring
> about the kinds of changes in the classroom that are
> necessary in order for our students to become
> literate, a point that Freire's literacy campaigns
> have borne out (Zamel, 1987: 706).

What has emerged in this field is that the primary goal of

teaching is for students to communicate meaning and this is
seen as a result of "their growing sense of a divergent
audience and their conscious awareness of the means by which
they (can) manipulate language as they (develop) their own
voices" (Urzua, 1987: 282). An example of this is students
choosing their own topics and making subsequent decisions
about what to revise and who the writing is aimed at.

Function and audience are differently weighted in the product
and process paradigms, the two paradigms which are currently
opposed. The following analysis attempts to explore the
strengths and weaknesses of each of these paradigms. The
discussion pertaining to each paradigm has been organised
under the same headings to facilitate comparison and contrast.

2.2 The Traditional-Product Paradigm

In this paradigm, writing is regarded as a linear sequence of
events where writers are seen first to plan and to reflect
about the content of the essay before settling down to write.
Once the writing is completed, it is handed in and checked by
the teacher for correct usage, grammar and spelling. The
different aspects of writing tend to be handled separately
within the traditional-product paradigm.

2.2.1 <u>Planning</u>

Planning is regarded as an essential feature of writing in the
product paradigm. Students are given the opportunity to
assemble and order their thoughts on paper. A well formulated
and logical plan or outline is expected of students. It is
assumed that the ideas have been thought out clearly and are
now ready to be articulated in the form of a piece of writing.
Preparing to write is therefore finding a form into which to
organise content. Plans could be submitted as a measure of
organised thought and are seen as providing a clear framework
for the structure and content of the writing.

Students are reminded that poorly structured and poorly argued
essays are indications of a lack of planning. Thus, students'
difficulties in writing are traced to this stage and plans
would have to be reformulated in order to produce better
products. The purpose of writing in the product paradigm
though is to produce a piece of work which will be handed in
for final assessment. Therefore the main thrust of the
activity is in the production of this end-product even if it
has been largely shaped by an outline or plan.

Planning procedures from a product perspective have been
criticised in terms of their rigidity, as "pre-existing
organisational molds (sic)" which are seen to shape the product
(Taylor in Mckay, 1984: 6). This is felt to detract from

writing as a discovery process. The criticism applies in situations where plans are regarded as key determinants of both the content and form of a piece of writing, and where an open-ended, flexible approach is discouraged.

Planning is seen differently from a process paradigm which does not view this aspect of writing as distinct from the others. The process paradigm considers pre-writing stages as an integral part of the production process itself and not necessarily ending when the writing begins.

2.2.2 Grammar

The focus in the traditional-product paradigm is on the production of a piece of writing which is analysed in terms of its grammatical accuracy. The teaching of traditional grammar and editing skills is seen as paramount in the teaching of writing. Students are requested to identify and correct lists of errors in sentences and to analyse models of successful prose. An example of this approach found in many English textbooks available to teachers, involves a structured, step-by-step guide to the teaching of writing (Paulston, 1976: 83). Each chapter presents grammatical items and models of "good writing" and involves students in "free writing" based on planning outlines with an aftermath of error checking and correction.

Another example of this emphasis on structural grammar is Wohl's book entitled <u>Preparation for Writing: Grammar</u> (1978). It includes complex rules, tables and exercises in the following areas: tense and aspect, the use of determiners, alternate forms and stylistic variation, relative clauses, nominalizations and persistent problems such as adverbs of frequency and noun modifiers. It is assumed that students will write more accurately if they engage in such grammatical activities. McKay (1984) has pointed out that a step by step structural approach to grammar, when one new grammatical structure is presented at a time, "often helps students feel that they are mastering the language and makes the teacher feel that she has covered all the important points of the language" (McKay, 1984: 13).

The critique of this approach is that its focus on technical accuracy pays little attention to students' own linguistic growth as they develop as writers. These exercises may be useful as students become increasingly aware of their own areas of difficulty in writing and are able to integrate grammatical activities into their personalised "remedial" programmes. (see 3.2 and 3.6) However, used in isolation, these texts tend to reinforce the notion that students have to learn these grammatical items in order to become better writers. This could create a situation where there is an unselective reliance on texts of this nature. As Perera says, "Planned intervention (in such books) can be implemented by

means of demonstration and example, without the use of technical terminology or battery of exercises" (Perera, 1984: 13).

In English second language teaching, writing has been seen as synonymous with the study of grammar for, "as long as E.S.L. students continue to have serious written language problems, many E.S.L. writing programmes will concentrate primarily on teaching language, form and correctness" (Taylor, in McKay: 1984, 6).

Grammar is seen as one aspect of writing that can be taught in a straightforward and uncomplicated way. McKay (1984) has demonstrated that in most English teaching situations there is an "equation of manipulation of sentence structure with the act of composing" as teachers feel comfortable with a focus on form and style (McKay, 1984: 43).

2.2.3 Error

In the product paradigm, the teacher attempts to direct students to progress "without error" at their best individual rates. Students are required to correct their mistakes and to be conscious at all times of correct language usage. In her analysis of children's writing, Katherine Perera (1984) has shown the need for teachers to recognise that there are many kinds of errors that students make which arise from a variety of causes and which require different remedies. This is a

major advance within the product paradigm because teachers are
sensitised to linguistic criteria (such as vocabulary or
structure) and non-linguistic criteria (such as irrelevancies
or inappropriate style) for making judgements of students'
work. Perera justifies her concentration on structure by
remarking that "without some explicit formal knowledge, it is
hard for teachers to respond appropriately and helpfully to
children's use of grammar" (Perera, 1984: 7).

Thus work is assessed as a finished product primarily in terms
of grammatical errors and structural difficulties and there is
an assumption that students need to have complex knowledge in
this area. Even though error is seen in a less negative light
and more as an indicator of the gaps in students' application
systems, there is the tendency for students within this
paradigm to be primarily concerned with producing a neat,
error-free end product.

Krashen (1984) has challenged the importance of revision at
"sentence level" as he quotes studies which show that poor
writers focus much more on form (spelling, verb changes etc.)
and less on content (meaning or "macrostructure") when they
revise their work (Krashen, 1984: 16). There is a danger in
the product paradigm of confusing revision and "correcting"
which concentrates merely on the mechanics of writing (see
2.3.6).

2.2.4 Structure

In the traditional-product paradigm, there is a heightened awareness of the paragraph as the basic structural unit. The paragraph is seen as an "essay in miniature" and it is assumed that if one can write a good paragraph, one is able to write a good essay (Wohl, 1985: 1). Planning is seen as the basis of good paragraphing as students give an outline of their main ideas or arguments (each to form the basis of a paragraph) before including details, examples or elaborations. A common structure for an essay is the introduction, body and conclusion. The introduction gives direction to the writing and is an outline of what is to follow, the "body" consists of discrete but linked paragraphs and the conclusion is a summary or tying together of the main ideas. These requirements of a well-structured essay will be critically assessed in the research report not in terms of their necessity, but in terms of how they are "arrived at". There is a tendency to teach essay structure in a prescriptive manner, for example, "An introduction must always define the topic and explain how the question will be tackled" when other criteria might have been more appropriate for a particular topic (see 2.3.4 and 3.4).

In the product paradigm, exercises are geared towards the identification of topic sentences, removal of irrelevant sentences as well as rearranging sentences and paragraphs into logical order (see Read Well, 1986). Important aspects of

structure are simple sentences and how they are combined to
form longer, more complex ones. Activities revolve around the
use of relative clauses and co-ordination as well as "matters
of style" (Wohl, 1985: 46). For example, Write Well (1986)
contains numerous lively exercises on joining sentences in
logical order and on building paragraphs. This "internal
patterning" is developed through skills such as the use of
connectives or linking devices and is seen to bolster both
grammatical structure and the organisation of thought in
writing (Gannon, 1985: 58).

In the product paradigm there is a focus on different ways of
organising essays, for example, chronological, comparison,
contrast and cause and effect. Krashen however maintains that
writers who are also readers

> do not need these rules to improve their writing:
> instructions from the teacher on how to write, rules
> on the use of topic sentences, transitions,
> conclusions, etc. are in a sense old information for
> those who have read, as they have already acquired
> these concepts subconsciously (Krashen, 1984: 36).

Nevertheless, the activities mentioned above are useful in
alerting students to the need for careful structuring and
organisation. An alternative way of dealing with this element
of writing and of incorporating these activities will be
presented in Chapter 3.

2.2.5 Models/Reading

Models are seen as giving students exposure to "lexical items, structured patterns and conventions at all levels of discourse" (Watson, in McKay, 1984: 46). Thus the scrutiny of a model becomes a major focus of activity. In the product paradigm, students are provided with "good" models of work before they begin writing and are encouraged to emulate the models in terms of their structural and grammatical elements. Modelling is viewed as a conscious procedure and definite standards are set by the teacher which students become increasingly conscious of.

Examples of both well structured and poorly structured paragraphs and essays are presented to students for the purposes of familiarising students with the elements of "good" writing. Theoretically, this should lead to students producing "good" final products as opposed to ungrammatical and poorly structured work. After students' writing has been assessed, models taken from their "good" writing are discussed in order to highlight correct writing procedures.

From this perspective, there is a tendency for writing to be viewed as formulaic in that there are correct and incorrect ways of doing things. For example, a well-structured essay which states the content matter clearly and which argues convincingly is seen as the best approach to dealing with a particular topic and possibly undermines other attempts at

doing so. Dykstra (1973) has indicated that writing models are artificial collections of sentences in which the product and not the process of writing can be observed and suggests that models be used as a resource within, rather than at the beginning of the writing process. It will be shown that this aspect of writing can be used by process paradigm implementers, however, the way in which it is incorporated differs greatly.

2.2.6 Methods of Assessment/Correction

It is often the method of assessment that determines the content and nature of the learning process. As Squire says,

> The way in which we assess language learning will influence to a great degree what teachers teach and what most children learn. A curriculum circumscribed by endless short answer tests will lead to high school graduates who can successfully check correct multiple choice answers...yet cannot summarise what the paragraph means (Squire in Chorney, 1985: 15).

The same principle applies to the teaching of writing in that the learners will be motivated to create a grammatically and structurally "perfect" product if they are aware that their work will be judged primarily in terms of its accuracy in the product paradigm. This has major implications for students who could become caught up in an extrinsically motivating situation where "marks" themselves take precedence over the creative assembling of a written piece of work. Whether this

does happen is dependent on the methodology used and what the focus of the activity is. However, a rigid adherence to the technical assessment of products is likely to make students over- reliant on the teacher's evaluation of their piece of work.

The ethos in many D.E.T and T.E.D. schools is one which focuses on external standards and which rarely encourages students to formulate their own ideas and strategies. These are generally imposed from above as are various obscure forms of evaluation. This forms part of a school ethos in which students generally play a passive role in the learning process. As a result, students take little responsibility for their work and become fully dependent on outside forces for defining their tasks, telling them how to perform them, and for evaluating them.

This can be linked to Barnes' (1975) distinction between assessment and reply. Teachers' <u>assessment</u> of their students implies a distancing from students' views and a turning towards external standards for assessing the form of communication. This is opposed to <u>reply</u> which involves a response to the meanings that students have attempted to articulate in their writing. Barnes argues that by assessing students' work and by not replying to it, teachers are "implicitly devaluing" the students' own meanings and that this precludes a sharing, collaborative relationship. Zamel says about teachers of E.S.L. students, "They

are so distracted by language-related problems that they often

correct these without realising that there is a much larger,

meaning-related problem that they have failed to address"

(Zamel, 1987: 700).

2.2.7 Function and Audience

The focus of the traditional-product approach is on the

grammatical and structural elements of a finished piece of

writing and content is regarded as secondary. As a result, the

purpose or function of writing is not regarded as essential in

its own right or as key in determining some of the other

features of writing. As Medway argues,

> The object is to produce a fine piece of writing:
> the writing is the end, and not...a means to
> something else, such as a fuller understanding. Once
> the writing has reached a degree of shape and
> fullness and explicitness, that is a satisfactory
> culmination and the end of the process: the class
> may proceed on to the next topic (Medway, 1986: 52).

In traditional classroom settings, transactional tasks both in

English classes and across the curriculum, are given

preference. This involves the language of science, technology,

trade, planning, reporting, instructing, informing, advising,

persuading, arguing and theorising. These transactional

activities or descriptions of first-hand experiences were found

by Medway (1986) to be of "no particular significance", such as

"A day in the life of an artist" or "Dreams" and are chiefly

determined by the teacher in terms of their content and scope.
Burgess has shown how most children are not permitted control
over their own writing. If the content of their writing is too
rigidly controlled and omits a "personal context for
knowledge" then they are not using writing in the "exploration
of what they are coming to know" (Burgess in Chorney, 1985:
53) (see 2.3.7).

In an E.S.L. context writing is often more limited to trans-
actional tasks. Studies have shown (Zamel, 1987) that E.S.L.
teachers focus predominantly on grammar, vocabulary and basic
skills. In tracing the history of second language teaching,
Freedman (1983) has shown that there is little attempt to
elicit an expression of students' selves through the new
language and that writing is merely seen as the "servant" of
grammar.

In the product paradigm, there is an undermining of the notion
of a wider sense of audience besides "writing for the teacher"
(Martin, 1976: 42). Teachers themselves often become the sole
listeners, readers, editors or evaluators of the completed
piece of work. Students are not considered developed or
astute enough to make useful criticisms of their peers' work,
particularly as the focus is on technical elements which do
require some knowledge and understanding.

2.2.8 Critique of the Traditional-Product Paradigm

Many of the weaknesses of the traditional-product paradigm
have been identified by contemporary theorists. Most
criticisms focus on the lack of active engagement on the part
of learners as they are slotted into a predetermined set of
activities which leaves very little room for discovery or for
them to try things out for themselves.

Shaughnessy has commented that,

> Teachers themselves promote this narrow and
> inhibiting view of perfection by ignoring all stages
> of the writing process except the last, where formal
> correctness becomes important, and by confronting
> students with models of good writing by well-known
> writers without ever mentioning the messy process
> that leads to clarity...the record of a remarkable
> interplay between the writer as creator and the
> writer as reader (Shaughnessy, 1977: 79).

Zamel's studies have shown that students experiencing writer's
block, become anxious because of the belief that teachers
expect perfect papers. This produces a self-defeating attitude
in students who tell themselves, "It is too hard for me to
write; I am foolish because I can't follow the rules; I don't
dare to write" (Zamel, 1987: 699).

This too is an indication of the primary role played by
teachers as examiners who merely assess the final written
products on the basis of standard criteria or "correct" usage.

As a result, students come to understand that writing is performed for teachers and not for anyone else. McNamara (1982) expresses this when he says,

> Only when the student fearfully presents his written paper to the teacher for judgement does the teacher again step forward. He elaborately decorates the paper with marginal comments, and returns it to the pupil with a ritual show of authority...The entire procedure undermines confidence, produces antagonism and often bewilders the average student (McNamara, 1982: 661).

Within the product paradigm, there is an abundance of "demonstration teaching" in which students are shown how something is done without the complementary involvement of doing the same thing for themselves (Smith, 1982: 171). The methodology involves a display of prescriptive step by step writing guidelines which students are required to follow. Smith argues that for learning to take place, there has to be engagement with a demonstration, as direct as the manner in which "gears engage in a mechanical device" (Smith, 1982: 171).

Students become passive if they are not in a position to take any responsibility for what they are doing. Tasks which are geared towards grammatical perfection tend to exacerbate learners' feelings of inadequacy and contribute to their feelings of impotence in the learning process. Second language learners have additional linguistic obstacles and become locked into their difficulties. As Shaugnessy (1977) has pointed out,

> Some writers, inhibited by their fear of error, produce but a few lines an hour or keep trying to begin, crossing out one try after another until the sentence is hopelessly tangled (Shaughnessy, 1977: 7).

Because of the demand for error-free written products, learners are denied the opportunity to come to grips with their personal and social realities through writing. There is often a discepancy between students' written and spoken performances because of this anxiety to display a perfect piece of work. As McNamara (1982) says,

> One often hears teachers complain that students who express themselves vividly in conversation "choke up" when asked to put their ideas on paper. A large measure of this anxiety is produced by the teacher-pupil relationship itself in most writing classes (McNamara, 1982: 662).

The traditional-product approach, nevertheless, remains the most favoured in our classrooms, a factor well worth investigating in a South African context where there has been some reluctance to transform conventional notions of teaching. Teachers perpetuate "one of the best kept secrets in school" - that good writers revise their writing, and produce numerous drafts (Smith, 1982: 196). Students are often required to complete their compositions in one class period. Their first attempts at writing are expected to be their finished articles as it is considered difficult to encourage a process of drafting in the school system.

2.3 The Process Paradigm

The principles behind this approach have emerged by
implication in the critique of the traditional-product
paradigm. According to McKay (1984) the process of writing
rarely proceeds in a linear fashion and the various components
of writing come into play throughout the writing process. Thus
writing is not seen as an activity in which thoughts flow
after a plan has been constructed. The process of writing
involves an interaction of planning, retrieving information,
creating new ideas and revising language.

Even though this chapter has been conveniently divided into
aspects, it is not intended to imply that writing is a staged
process that proceeds in discreet steps or that the aspects
cannot be integrated in actual teaching. All of the elements of
writing interact with each other throughout the writing process
and can be incorporated into writing programmes selectively and
flexibly.

2.3.1 Planning

From this perspective it is acceptable if the student has some
overview of what he or she is going to say, as long as it is
not too binding or prescriptive for the entire piece of work.
It has been demonstrated by Krashen (1984) that good writers
differ from poor writers in that they plan in a more flexible

and open-ended way. The critique of the traditional-product paradigm is that planning is seen as a constraint in which there is a rigid adherence to a set of ideas which may well alter in the course of writing.

Writing in the process paradigm is thus viewed as a recursive rather than a linear process and prewriting, writing and rewriting activities often overlap and intertwine. Flower and Hayes (1981) have shown the rarity of ideas being fully formulated in the writer's mind before drafting begins. The act of writing is not seen as a series of stages or steps that add up to a finished product as the "tasks of planning, retrieving information, creating new ideas and producing and revising language all interact with each other throughout composing" (Flower and Hayes, 1980: 32). Planning is regarded as indispensible to the writing process as it reduces cognitive strain. However, writing practice itself is seen to enhance the quality of planning strategies. The focus, therefore, is on the drafting of essays which have, to some extent, been informed by an initial plan.

There appears to be some difficulty though in defining both the form and extent of planning in the process paradigm. This could result in rather ad hoc and poorly structured pieces of writing. It would be interesting to explore the possibilities of a combined product-process approach to this aspect of writing as some of the issues around planning and the

incubation stage might be resolved. For example, good writers
are seen to make "high level" plans, but continue to return to
and develop those plans as they write (Flower and Hayes, 1980:
48).

2.3.2 Grammar

Within the process paradigm, there is a strong argument
against equating the teaching of writing with the teaching of
formal grammar. Evidence has shown that the teaching of
grammar does not necessarily transfer to writing (see Krashen,
1984). "Conscious rule-learning" is applied to raise accuracy
of writing only after there has been an attempt to communicate
meaning (Krashen, 1983: 23). It is not possible to focus on
form and meaning simultaneously (see 2.3.6).

In language teaching the teachers' role is seen to be limited
to the monitoring of the form of students' writing. There is a
move against a grammatically sequenced approach found in the
product paradigm as it is believed that "acquirers
automatically receive far better exposure to and practice on
those structures they are "ready" to acquire next" (Krashen,
1984: 22). Progression in language competence is seen to
happen primarily via written or spoken input, i.e. by
listening or reading. The de-emphasis of grammar teaching is
felt to reduce over-editing, thereby increasing writers'
fluency substantially.

Perera (1984) agrees with this hypothesis as she points to the body of research which indicates that grammatical instruction unrelated to pupils' other language work,

> does not lead to an improvement in the quality of their own writing or in the level of their own comprehension. Furthermore, the majority of children...seem to become confused by grammatical labels and descriptions (Perera, 1984: 12).

In an E.S.L. context, Zamel highlights studies that point to the "ineffective strategies of the monitor overuser" as students develop defeatist attitudes to writing because of the emphasis on the "conscious memorisation of rules" (Zamel, 1987: 698). Formal grammar teaching is seen as no substitute for writing. "Despite the frequent efforts to teach these rules, they are not the means by which children become writers" (Smith, 1982: 191).

A process approach requires no predetermined grammar syllabus and problems are treated as they emerge. "By studying what it is our students do in their writing, we can learn from them what they still need to be taught" (Zamel, 1983: 182). Shaughnessy (1977) proposes an inductive style of learning in grammar teaching as this focuses on students' procedures of self-enquiry and self analysis rather than being solely guided by the teacher.

McArthur, (1983) points out the difference between conser-

vative and radical teachers. The former use grammar explicitly
by means of "deductive grammar work" and the latter use
grammar implicitly in the classroom with "no special
selection, gradation and presentation until the student
requires it" (McArthur, 1983: 104). For example, McNamara
(1982) considers a student's choice to use one writing style
or another as a rhetorical issue rather than as a question of
grammar or "correct" English. Most theorists in the process
paradigm have agreed upon the importance of technical editing
only in the final stages of the composing process so that
grammatical items and conventions be applied to give writing a
polished look. The issues around the teaching of grammar will
be taken up more comprehensively when a writing programme is
analysed in Chapter 4.

2.3.3 Error

Shaughnessy (1977) has highlighted the reluctance on the part
of learners to play with ideas if they are constantly
interrupting their fluency to look for errors. From the
process perspective, errors are seen as a "natural part of
language, they arise from learners' active strategies e.g.
overgeneralisation and ignorance of rule restrictions"
(Krashen, 1984: 62). There is an attempt to understand errors
psycholinguistically and teaching strategies are adapted to
particular errors and learners' linguistic development. Errors
might even be ignored if they interfere with the learners'

concentration on the "communication of meanings" (Littlewood, 1984: 72). Errors show that learners are experimenting with the language and that their understanding of it is incomplete. This is an advance on the obsession with error, characteristic of an extreme form of the product approach. The process approach has moved away from considering language solely from the point of view of form.

2.3.4 Structure

In the process paradigm, structure emerge- as ideas are formulated and put down on paper. For examp_e, ntences and paragraphs are rearranged after the first draft has been written and this often changes the original planning procedure. Introductions can also be written after the first draft when there is a clearer idea of what is contained in the essay. This does depend on the purpose of a particular essay though, as some students need to write an introduction at the start to focus and guide them through the essay. Shaugnessy has made the point that E.S.L. students do not need to wait until all their sentence problems have been dealt with before dealing with the organisation and development of essays. She sees deficiencies in grammar as separate from deficiencies in organisation.

2.3.5 Models/Reading

From a process perspective, reading is seen as the significant model for the acquisition of writing skills. Krashen (1984) has argued that writing competence is achieved through practice in reading for meaning i.e. by "understanding messages encoded in written language" (Krashen, 1984: 28). Studies have shown that in general, writers who read show greater improvement in writing than writers who have merely received grammatical instruction, as they tend "to have acquired a feeling for reader-based prose in general" (Flower and Hayes, 1984: 30). It is argued that a well read person has a richer set of images of what a text looks like and that this has implications for his or her writing. This differs from the product paradigm where models are given to students as part of a conscious effort to improve their writing skills.

Reading is seen as a process in which language structures are unconsciously and cumulatively internalised and built up. The deliberate use of models is seen as too static and technical compared to the enriching and empowering experience of reading. It will be demonstrated in the attempt at synthesising the two approaches that models can be used to foster a critical outlook rather than a passive and impotent one in students and that this can have a bearing on students' own writing and reading processes.

2.3.6 Methods of Assessment/Revision

Burgess (1985) has expressed the need to set learning free
from teaching that is conceived as "patterns of evaluation,
testing and checking by which learning is reduced to what can
be taught and writing to a form of demonstration" (Burgess in
Chorney, 1985: 55). Students need to learn to be aware of
their own learning processes and to develop ways of monitoring
their own and others' work. Revision is proposed as the
"crucial point when discovery and organisation come together,
when writers refine and recast what they have written and
shape it into a coherent written statement" (Freedman, 1983:
103).

The power of revision as opposed to language editing serves to
clarify writing as a discovery procedure.

> Writers reread their drafts, discover what they
> said, match this message with what they intended to
> say, and rework...the content and structure of the
> written piece to make it congruent with their
> intentions (Shih, 1986: 626).

Smith (1982) makes a useful distinction between transcription
and composition, the former involving the physical effort of
writing, spelling, punctuation and other technical concerns;
and the latter involving the getting of ideas and the
selection of words. Smith argues that because composition and
transcription interfere with each other, they have to be

separated when students are revising their work,

> The way to circumvent the pressures of transcription
> is to ignore them until they can be given full
> attention - that is, in the course of editing, when
> the prior demands of composition have been met
> (Smith, 1982: 120).

Student are therefore encouraged to attend to content
revisions first and to delay editing changes until the final
draft.

Within the process paradigm there is a critique of teachers
who customarily "correct" papers rather than read them and
make an evaluation "after the student has finished writing the
paper and not during the composing process" (Shaughnessy,
1977: 84). Teachers should confer with students while they are
writing rather than ferret out their errors in the final
product. Students become self-critical and objective about
their own writing as they are encouraged to diagnose their own
strengths and weaknesses. Krashen (1984) highlights the
Garrison method in which the teacher focuses on one aspect of
students' writing at a time, "beginning with having enough
concrete information, then moving to aspects of organisation,
and finally to mechanics" (Krashen, 1984: 11). Students are
given the opportunity to write for a variety of purposes and
evaluation of their work is part of a continuing process of
diagnosis.

The concept of a teacher <u>replying</u> to a student rather than
assessing him or her is seen to encourage students to bring
out their existing knowledge so that it can be reshaped in the
process of interaction and sharing with others. Teachers will
not be seen as mere assessors who respond to technical
accuracy rather than to meaning. Unlike the product
perspective, instructors evaluate the written product by how
well it fulfills the writer's intentions and meets the
audience's needs. This area will be dealt with in 2.3.7.

Adler (1985) has shown how students, through a process of peer
editing, learn ways in which to become "informed artists,
rather than artists dependent on teachers as they progress in
their ability to write" (Adler in Chorney, 1985: 65). Graves
(1983) has speculated that group feedback helps writers to
improve because they develop an awareness of their own writing
as they reflect on the writing of others. Thus a "community of
writers" develops of students who are constantly in tune with
what they are doing and why they and their peers are doing it.
Barnes (1975) has also shown how people with whom we
collaborate in a sharing relationship are likely to influence
us much more profoundly than those who assess us on the basis
of external standards.

2.3.7. Functions and Audience

In the late 1970's and early 1980's, the team of Flower and
Hayes helped to establish the idea of "process" in the minds
of teachers. They see the act of composing as a goal-directed
thinking process, guided by the writer's own growing network
of goals and developing sense of purpose. Their studies have
demonstrated that the crucial difference between good and poor
writers lies in "the kind and quality of goals writers give
themselves" (Flower and Hayes, 1981: 243) The teacher responds
to the meaning of the students' work rather than the form.
What is hoped will emerge is a "classroom dialogue in which
sharing predominates over presenting, in which the teacher
replies rather than assesses" and "strengthens the learner's
confidence in actively interpreting the subject-matter"
(Barnes, 1975: 132). In support of this position, Perera
(1984) quotes the Bullock Report which states that

> a writer's intention is prior to his need for
> techniques. The teacher who aims to extend the
> pupil's power as a writer must therefore work first
> upon intentions and then upon the techniques
> appropriate to them (DES, 1975: 164).

In this area, an important distinction has been made between
discovery and meaning-making (Flower and Hayes, 1980). It is

felt that discovery is a myth which implies a method based on the premise that "hidden stores of insight and ready-made ideas exist, buried in the mind of the writer, waiting only to be 'discovered'" (Flower and Hayes, 1980: 21). Flower and Hayes argue that writing is a problem-solving process of creating rather than discovering ideas as "writers discover what they do by insistently, energetically exploring the entire problem before them and building for themselves a unique image of the problem they want to solve" (ibid: 31).

Medway (1986), in addressing the failure on the part of schools to generate a critical investigation of the environment, suggests a change in the form and content of writing. He sees journals as promoting on-going dialogue and comment by students about their environments. The writing itelf is not the point of the activity. The thoughts and impressions in the journals function to generate class and group discussions which in turn form the basis for further writing and follow-up activities. This is a somewhat different approach to the usual practice of students displaying their finished products to the teacher for assessment.

Urzua (1987), working in an E.S.L. context, has also acknowledged the interactive nature of journals because of continuous feedback and a strong sense of audience felt by students. It was found that children were more effective when they chose their own topics and they developed a greater sense

of honesty and openness in the communication of "real" stories (Graves, 1983). Studies have shown that children's literacy in both first and second languages was promoted in programmes that emphasised "purposeful writing for a variety of audiences and allowed them to choose their own topics" (Zamel, 1987: 704). In addition, it was shown that when students were involved in ethnographic research in their communities, based on their own experiences and skills, they developed a strong sense of responsibility and control over their writing and were better prepared for academic work in English (Zamel, 1987: 705).

Krashen has reinforced the point that second language acquisition increases when there is a focus on understanding meaning rather than understanding how it is expressed. This happens via extensive reading for genuine interest or pleasure. Many of the researchers into the teaching of writing argue that it is as important to provide activities for the formation of ideas in English for second language speakers as it is for first language speakers.

It has been demonstrated by Flower and Hayes (1980) that good writers are a lot more concerned with their reader and audience than novice writers who tend to be tied to the topic. These better writers are seen to be constantly developing their image of the reader as they write and as they explore their ideas. It is argued that transforming writer-based prose

(writing for the self) to reader-based prose (bearing the audience in mind) is a useful place to start with the teaching of important writing skills. This transformation can take place at any point in the process, the critical skill is "being able to organise what one knows with a reader in mind" (Flower and Hayes, 1981: 72). There is a move away from a narrow conception of audience to one in which there is a wide range of possible readers.

This implies a drafting process in which the writer develops a strong sense of audience as fellow students and teacher critically review the piece of writing on the basis of prioritised criteria: decided on by both students and teacher (see 3.6 for elaboration of checklist idea). As Shaugnessy says, "the teaching of writing must often begin with the experience of dialogue and end with the experience of a real audience, not only of teachers but of peers" (Shaugnessy, 1977: 83).

This is not only in the interests of the writer who can benefit from the broad range of input, but also of the readers, who develop critical reading skills and who are now in a better position to revise their own drafts after reading others'. Thus students are granted the independence they need to think and write for themselves. Zajonc (1960) has documented studies which demonstrate students being less likely to order their thoughts for a reader possessing

authoritative knowledge than for a wider and possibly
less-informed audience.

In E.S.L. contexts there has been an increasing emphasis on
audience as students are given the opportunity to write for a
"range of purposes and a variety of audiences" (Zamel, 1987:
703). Students have also been encouraged to co-operate with
each other in a process of group editing and feedback in an
open and non-judgemental environment. Urzua (1987) has shown
how students have begun to develop voices of their own because
of a growing awareness of other readers who are interested in
their writing.

In Urzua's studies, a procedure was formulated in which
writers read their first drafts to an audience of both fellow
students and the teacher. The listeners made notes and wrote
down questions of clarification for the writer, and on the
basis of these comments, the writer revised the draft. Urzua
argues how obvious it is from the changes made that the
students were eager to show their respect for the audience's
opinions.

2.3.8 Critique of the Process Paradigm

Because the teaching of writing draws on a variety of skills
and resources and demands a certain amount of innovation and
energy on the part of the teacher, it is often a neglected

area in the teaching of English. Often, all it involves is the mechanical handing out of prescribed topics, the demonstration of certain strategies and evaluation confined to surface criteria. Smith (1982) comments on how little anyone writes at school and how inadequate the feedback is. The process approach to the teaching of writing attempts to offer an alternative way of dealing with some of these difficulties. Writing is not seen as a "tidy sequencing of stages", because "the tasks of planning, retrieving information, creating new ideas and producing and revising language all interact with each other throughout composing" (Flower and Hayes, 1980: 32).

Many strengths in the teaching of writing have been attributed to the process paradigm, particularly students' ability to overcome "mental block". When a classroom functions as a "community of writers" the students are able to establish a trusting relationship with their teacher and to write less anxiously (Zamel, 1987: 703). There is a move away from displaying a set of guidelines to students which they feel they have to follow in order to succeed. Students are themselves coming to grips with many of the issues involved in writing as participants in the process and not merely following instructions.

It emerges from the literature review that the process approach to writing does lend itself to a changed conception of educational praxis within a transforming South African

Author Dison L
Name of thesis Teaching writing to English second language learners 1989

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