

society. Freire (1985) has argued that learning should not be a matter of repeating and memorising, but should involve critical reflection with a view to understanding and transforming society. This can happen if students are no longer passive and are not mere objects of the learning process.

One of the great values of the decentralised classroom where students participate as teachers as well as learners is that it opens up the students' "secret" files of misinformation, humour, confusion and linguistic insight to an extent that is often not possible in the traditional setting (Shaugnessy, 1977: 40).

What is clear is that students' independent learning procedures are fostered, as are processes of self discovery and problem-solving. According to Urzua (1987), students that she taught developed a sense of power in language as they recognised, largely through revision, that language (could) be manipulated and rearranged, that sections of a composition (could) be deleted or added. They realised they were masters, not slaves (Urzua, 1987: 292).

Nevertheless, the process approach has its own shortcomings, many of which are apparent within the South African school system. It must be borne in mind that the process approach to writing should not ignore or undermine the development of basic competence with sub-skills. For example, there is a tendency for teachers to minimise the value of grammar

teaching if the stress is on process.

It is significant that issues around the role of the teacher in this co-operative group-learning situation have not been fully addressed in the process paradigm and the danger exists that the procedure may become too unstructured and open-ended. It is often argued that the teachers' role is to facilitate student-centred, collective learning. As a result, teachers may justify taking a "backseat" in the classroom in the interests of democratic teaching practices, without taking into account some of the difficulties experienced by students in groups (see 3.8).

In the process paradigm, it is to the detriment of students if they are not directed enough or given the tools with which to manipulate the language for whatever purposes. There needs to be a balance between teachers' crucial intervention and the students taking responsibility for, and control of, the learning situation. "The value of instruction is that it can help cure and prevent inefficient or "tangled" composing processes" (Krashen, 1984: 27). Teachers may be willing to jettison traditional teaching habits in favour of techniques that are radically different and which challenge authority structures at both micro and macro-levels. But this should not be at the cost of the development of students' potential as writers which does require some discipline and structure. Teachers should respond to students as "fellow-learners and

fellow-craftsmen" and be "midwives to the creation" (Freedman, 1983: 185).

A further difficulty is if teachers themselves lack confidence in their own abilities and skills and become threatened by a situation in which they are relinquishing whatever small control they have over the students. As mentioned in the product paradigm, teachers cling to traditional models of instruction. This is often an extension of the prescribed syllabuses that teachers are compelled to teach. Squire has pointed out that,

Not until we face clearly the great dichotomies between product and process, between correctness and appropriateness, between atomistic teaching and holistic teaching, will we bring clarification to the present dilemma. (Squire in Chorney, 1985: 15).

These questions will be addressed when a programme for the upgrading of English second language teachers (TELIP) is analysed in Chapter 4.

Finally, it must be pointed out that the material conditions of many Department of Education and Training schools do not allow for a non-evaluative, collaborative environment where students generate their own topics. This is as a result of both ideological control from education departments and practical constraints such as lack of space and extremely large numbers of students. Even teachers who have the confidence and

willingness to challenge conventional practices are inhibited by such factors.

It is when one considers the potential shortcomings of the process paradigm applied in extreme form that a combination of product and process approaches seems viable for the formation of a "progressive" yet realistic framework for the teaching of writing.

CHAPTER THREE

3 A SYNTHESIS OF PRODUCT AND PROCESS APPROACHES TO THE
TEACHING OF WRITING

This chapter attempts to combine the most advantageous aspects of both product and process paradigms bearing in mind many of the shortcomings that have been mentioned in chapters 2 and 3. It will be shown that product-oriented techniques can be incorporated and built into a process approach in which there is an ethos of creating, sharing, exploring and risk taking.

One of the major strengths of the process approach is that students take responsibility for the writing themselves. They become aware of the criteria necessary for a good piece of writing. This they learn from their own writing practices and from developing a critical eye while they draft, revise, edit and proofread. Writing has been described as a self-conscious process because the writer must

stay with his points or depart from them in ways that make sense to his readers; he must recognise his commitments to explain or illustrate or prove; he must observe proportions; he must, in short, keep track of where he has been and look toward where he is going or risk losing both his line of thought and his reader (Shaughnessy, 1977: 250).

Students need to learn things that will further their control and understanding of their own and others' writing and that have meaning beyond the classroom. At the same time it is unwise to fall into the trap of dismissing all grammatical and rhetorical study and assume that students will develop accepted forms through sheer practice.

If teachers are to intervene constructively during the process of writing in order to assist with revising, editing and proof-reading, then they need to know what problems of composition confront children at different developmental levels and what linguistic difficulties are associated with different types of writing (Perera, 1984: 210).

It is hoped that some pointers will emerge from this research report which address questions related to the delicate balance teachers need to maintain between being too intrusive or too laissez-faire in strategy. An additional section on methodology will be included in this chapter to raise some possibilities for dealing with these issues.

This chapter is an analysis that is based largely on the writer's practical experience of teaching academic writing to first year Khanya College students. Many of the concrete examples and illustrations will be drawn from this E.S.L. context. It is too early at this point to determine the success of the approach at Khanya though results indicate an overall improvement in essay-writing practices. The synthesis is itself open to criticism and its usefulness as an analytical tool will be measured when TELIP material is discussed in the final Chapter.

3.1 Planning

In the process paradigm, planning is seen as more than just a time when ideas are formulated. Often, good writers use a plan as the starting point in their essays, yet they go back to revise it as their own thoughts change and develop. This is an important move away from the plan rigidly determining the entire essay. Many teachers still spend most of the classroom time on planning procedures and believe that the rest of the composing process will take care of itself.

There is some merit in spending time on planning, particularly if students are encouraged to brainstorm ideas by way of association and to share ideas with each other. Vygotsky's work (1962) shows the importance of talking about one's ideas before writing. This helps pupils to move from "maximally compact inner speech to maximally detailed written speech" (Vygotsky in Janks, 1988: 152). Even though students do need help in focusing the mind, there is an assumption that writing will come right "the first time" if the plan has been properly formulated. This is contrary to writing as a drafting process in which major shifts in thinking might occur and may challenge students to construct new meanings for themselves in the course of writing.

A synthesis approach does not discard plans altogether in favour of numerous drafts. The preparatory stage of

composition is regarded as crucial if it serves to "unblock" the writer and reduce performance anxiety through various brainstorming strategies such as the creative pattern. Other planning techniques include freewriting, various types of primary and secondary research (interviewing, experimenting, reading, etc.) and a period of "doing nothing," of incubation (Coe, 1986: 299). In groups, students can work on particular activities which they then present to the class for criticism. This enables the student to begin writing with a deeper understanding of the subject matter and with some confidence from others to proceed. Students will realise that they are much more effective working with others than working in isolation, attempting to emerge with "all the answers".

Other methods of "prewriting" can be encouraged such as the making of notes "whether in diaries and notebooks or in jottings on scraps of paper like old envelopes", which Smith calls "disposable writing" (Smith, 1982: 126). The importance of these is that students begin to see themselves as writers and that writing is not always a one-off activity which results in an immediately perfect end product. Writers can also see the overlap between the preparatory stage and the composing process itself which involves rewriting and editing. When students revise they can return to their original notes which are reminders to do something later on. They can modify and re-order parts of the text on the basis of these notes as well as observe the changes that have occurred since they began

writing. Smith says that the only distinction that can be made between pre-writing and revision is that of

emotional tone; pre-writing can be a time of tension, of alternate impatience and excitement as possibilities conceal and reveal themselves, whereas revision tends to be reflective, a contemplation of what an existing text or set of notes for a text is and might be (Smith, 1983: 128).

Flower and Hayes have shown that there is a strong connection between pausing and planning as writers "frequently reread their current text, pause, and write some more" (Flower and Hayes, 1981: 231). This could imply an exclusive dependence on "sentence-level planning" which is one of the marks of a poor writer. However, studies have shown that "children learn to write by learning to move from the sentence-level planning strategies of conversation to the whole-text planning required by writing" (Flower and Hayes, 1981: 231). This brings in Flower and Hayes's hierarchical conception of writing goals in which students learn, through graded activities, how to integrate sentence-level planning with "rhetorical or whole text planning," the "distinctive feature of mature writing" (Flower and Hayes, 1981: 233).

Flower and Hayes (1981) argue that the kind and quality of goals writers develop and their ability to use planning to guide their composing processes, distinguishes the good writers from the bad. One can generalise by saying that good

writers are able to use plans selectively and in a non-constraining way, whereas poor writers rely on this aspect of writing to channel them through an essay.

Planning is an aspect of writing that is fairly easy to teach, perhaps the reason why it is overemphasised at schools. It is an important area to begin improving students' writing through an awareness of high-level priorities and goals. As long as planning is placed in its proper perspective, alongside and interacting with other elements of writing and is not regarded as the time when all thoughts are created, students can develop as writers in a structured and supportive environment.

3.2 Grammar

The synthesis approach does not view the teaching of writing as synonymous with grammar teaching as is often the case in the product paradigm. Neither does it dismiss grammatical concerns as less than secondary to students' expression of meaning, which is a feature of certain laissez-faire process approaches. The synthesis approach argues that it is necessary for students to have an understanding of grammatical structures to help them while they are engaged in the writing process. As mentioned previously, though, identifying and correcting grammatical errors is an editorial rather than a composing skill and should not disrupt the fluency of the act of writing.

Even though the emphasis in the synthesis approach remains on the content and meaning of a particular essay or assignment, students need to be equipped with key grammatical concepts to check their own and others' writing. Shaughnessy points out that often "a seemingly simple feature of instruction will be located at the interstices of several grammatical concepts" (Shaughnessy, 1977: 130). For example, for a student to decide if a subject "agrees" with a verb, s/he has to understand what is meant by the term "agreement", identify the base words of the subject and predicate, determine whether the subject is singular or plural according to the conventions of formal English, to name but a few tasks. The rule for subject-verb agreement makes more sense in the context of students' own writing.

Grammar, in this paradigm, is not a matter of memorising rules which are "descriptions of sentences that are considered grammatical, descriptions of products rather than procedures by which grammatical sentences might be produced" (Smith, 1982: 191). Grammar texts are not relied on or used to initiate grammatical instruction. Students should be able to use various resources selectively, based on their acquired and learnt understanding of the complexity of language. Grammar handbooks often simplify grammatical concepts unrealistically whereas teachers should be prepared to move "with students, straight into the tangle,...until

patterns of difficulty begin to emerge" (Shaughnessy, 1977: 186). A repertoire of approaches to language is encouraged as opposed to allegiance to one particular school of grammar.

What has emerged from a critique of both product and process paradigms is that students develop an understanding of grammar when they are able to view their own work from the reader's perspective. The immediate problem is that students have a narrow conception of readership or audience because they often write exclusively for teachers. Shaughnessy proposes various strategies to shift students' perspective with regard to grammar. For example, in punctuation teaching, "exchange readings of student papers, an exposure to unpunctuated passages that students are required to read aloud, audiovisual demonstrations of the way a reader gets derailed by faulty punctuation" (Shaughnessy, 1977: 39). This is a move away from deductive grammar teaching and shows students that punctuation means something to people besides English teachers. For example, they can see that punctuation adds a measure of precision that is not possible in talk.

As mentioned earlier correctness is only one part of the process of writing, yet it is a sign of progress if students develop a healthy intolerance for errors that prevent clear and meaningful expression. There is little point in students learning grammar if they are not writing on a regular basis and understanding how language works in terms of their overall

intentions or goals. The synthesis approach does not undermine the value of grammar, but sees it as inseparable from composition. A technique for enabling students to develop an awareness of their own and others' grammatical weaknesses as well as how to remedy them in the final drafting process, is presented in 3.6.

3.3 Error

It is inevitable that students will make errors when they begin to experiment with writing for different purposes and with structures that are new to them. This approach argues that one should look at errors "in a way that does not ignore the linguistic sophistication of students nor yet underestimate the complexity of the task they face as they set about learning to write" (Shaughnessy, 1977: 13). As mentioned in the process approach, it is unproductive to develop an immobilising fear of errors and mistakes in students. If students do not have strategies for revising and editing their work, however, their errors will be reinforced and little development will occur.

Error awareness, like grammatical understanding, should be viewed in the context of the entire composition and the process through which ideas have been assembled and revised. Students should begin to distinguish between semantic and

grammatical problems, i.e. between sentences that are unclear in meaning, and those sentences that are unacceptable because of more technical and stylistic mistakes. Thus different types of error will be focused on at different points in the composing process. Also, students write more easily in certain styles than in others (narrative writing is generally easier than analytical writing) so the types of errors students make can be identified from a range of styles. This enables a certain amount of control over error analysis and students can develop a greater understanding of the criteria for "correctness"

Taken individually, most errors do not seriously alter a writer's meaning. Teachers in the process approach might therefore exclude any attempt to concentrate on grammatical error from a writing programme as it hinders the fluency of the writing. The synthesis approach supports this rationale and also stresses that error awareness should not inhibit the student as a writer. But, it is argued that errors "have the power, when they occur frequently, to hinder or even halt the average reader" and that there are appropriate places within the composing process for editing to take place (Shaughnessy, 1977: 158).

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Whatever the errors, though, students should be aware of the reasons for correcting them. It might be necessary for students to read the essay out loud before correcting what

sounds wrong or to have the essay read by someone else. One problem experienced by students at Khanya College is that they become proficient at identifying and correcting content and grammatical errors in others, but still have difficulty seeing the same problems in their own essays. There has been improvement if one or two items are dealt with at a time and overload is avoided. A time lapse may be needed between writing and revising to provide some distance for the writer. Correcting errors is probably the least rewarding and the most frustrating aspect of writing, yet once students have some idea of what they are correcting and why, it is empowering for them to have skill in an area usually reserved exclusively for teachers.

3.4 Structure

As mentioned in the process paradigm, some students have difficulty following instructions such as: "A sentence is a complete idea" or "A paragraph is a group of sentences that develops one main idea" while they are writing. It is only when they have finished their first draft and see their ideas written down on paper that overall structure and links between ideas start to become clearer. This technique is called the "outline later" technique and proposes that the writer make an outline of what is already written (Coe, 1986: 304). This serves to reveal the underlying structure of the draft as the writer makes a summary of the main point in each paragraph or section.

The "outline later" is a technique that...moves their attention from particular words to the structure of the whole writing. It helps them to see organisation - and dis- or mis-organisation (Coe, 1986: 306).

Students should learn how to choose appropriate structures for particular pieces of writing. If students are acquainted with a variety of structures such as description, comparison/contrast, narration, causal explanation etc., they will become proficient at identifying these patterns in their own and other's essays.

Structure is an integral part of the planning process as it builds on the initial outline. The synthesis approach argues that rigid structures and plans are constraints for the writer when they get in the way of a "free-flow" of ideas yet warns against moves to discard structure altogether. Once the ideas or arguments have been thought through and developed on paper uninterruptedly, it is essential for the writer to make a conscious effort to assemble and organise the writing coherently so that the reader can make sense of it.

Students are not always aware of how to produce or recognise their own main ideas. This often produces a form of mental block as students become immobilised trying to muster up a "main" idea. Shaughnessy suggests that ideas can only be generated if the conditions are favourable in the writing class. This means that students are

led gradually and with awareness from relatively simple to more complex tasks of conceptualisation, for it is largely by observing themselves "get" ideas that students begin to understand the difference between facts and inferences, subordinate and superordinate statements (Shaughnessy, 1977: 246).

Students will realise that topic sentences are governing sentences that they already know how to produce. With practice in identifying topic sentences, students will start "seeing" structure in their own writing and in a wide range of materials.

The same principle applies to introductions, "bodies" and conclusions, the standard structure for all essays. As mentioned in 2.2.4, students become confused when they are told what is expected of a "good" introduction, and this often produces stilted as well as inappropriate results. When students understand the purpose of a particular writing assignment, they can work out for themselves the suitable criteria for introduction and conclusion. For example, students can bend the rule that conclusions never include new information by including something of interest and relevance for the reader to think about. Strictly speaking, this is not new information, and is an attempt to make an impact at the end. Yet the rule itself could preclude such a thought from entering the writer's mind and the main points are summed up in a mechanical fashion.

3.5 Models/Reading

It has been argued that the key to learning about writing is for students to "read like writers" (Smith, 1982: 179). Because students begin to perceive themselves as writers, they develop more of an interest in both reading and writing. Students become aware of different reading strategies for different reading purposes, which facilitate a greater understanding of the reading-matter itself. As a result of learning the structures and thought patterns of written language, students learn to read their own work with the eyes of an outsider. "As readers they evaluate and edit their own writing to make it clear for their intended audience" (Perera, 1984: 270).

Reading is not seen in the same way in the product paradigm, where models are given to students initially as a conscious attempt to improve their form of writing. In the synthesis approach, reading plays a crucial role throughout the writing process: initially as stimulus material particularly for writing tasks across the curriculum and then as part of the evolving piece of writing when the students constantly read their drafts with a view to checking and revising them. In academic contexts good students return to written texts throughout the writing process, as their own developing ideas

challenge some of their original perceptions and interpretations of the reading material.

Nevertheless, written models can be incorporated into a synthesis approach if they are not seen merely as perfect products to be emulated in form. Models of exemplary student writing can become texts for critical analysis. Khanya College students have improved their own writing practices from examining pre-edited and final edited versions of good essays. They have developed an awareness of the importance of logic from working out key ideas of paragraphs in these essays. On this basis they are able to assess whether the essay has been adequately planned and structured. Such activities encourage a sharing ethos in which students learn to criticise each others' work constructively and to become less territorial about their work. Models are thus treated analytically and students become familiar with a range of writing styles.

Smith makes the point that reading in itself is not sufficient to learn, for example, to become a good punctuator because "demonstrations in a text do not show how to do something but only how something has been done" (Smith, 1982: 178). It is only when students attempt to write themselves and to work out the possibilities in practice that they can check for themselves or from an interested reader if their punctuation is appropriate or whether their intended meaning is clear. "In the act of writing, the writer is the first person to interact

with the text, which may then be made available to others" (Smith, 1982: 207). Thus good writing is not automatic once one is a good reader.

3.6 Methods of Assessment/Revision

It is deceptive to place revision at the end of the synthesis approach because revision as a process is contained within all aspects of writing. A Khanya College student remarked when reflecting on an essay test he had written, that he found himself re-reading paragraphs as he had finished writing them to check if he had "stuck to the topic". Even though he was concerned that this had disrupted his writing fluency, he concluded that this was good practice because he was able to monitor his work closely, think carefully about the development of his ideas, and think about the requirements of the essay from the examiner's perspective.

In a test this is useful practice because there is often insufficient time to redraft an essay or to make substantial changes at the end. The student illustrates the point that revision as an aspect of writing does not begin when the writing ends. The writer is constantly in a state of self-reflection even when there is time at the end to redraft the essay. Revision can happen at any "stage" in the writing process: When it goes on in our heads before we commit words to paper, we call it thinking and organising. When we do it

slightly later and on paper, we call it revision" (Flower, 1981: 72). Perera has identified errors that occur in writing which "stem from a failure to reread during the composing process" (Perera, 1984: 268). Examples of this are the omission of words and repetition, which can be remedied by proofreading and by students checking each other's work.

At Khanya College, a two-phase editing system has been developed which aims to make criteria for academic essays clear to students. Most teachers know the criteria for "good" essays automatically and they take it for granted that students become aware of them in the course of writing. The editing system has not been imposed on students as during the year activities are devised through which students themselves come to grips with the required expectations (see 3.4 and 3.5). Students first edit each other's work using a content checklist which changes according to the type of essay required and which concentrates on different elements at a time (see Appendix 1).

Students revise their work on the basis of feedback on the checklist. The essay may be totally restructured as further ideas are added, sentences are rearranged and parts are changed. In class, students can reflect on how this revision process has affected and changed their essays, as well as what they have learnt about their own essays from editing someone else's.

The second checklist is a language one and is reserved for the final stages of the drafting process to prevent preoccupation with error (see Appendix 2).

If a writer is not worried about being wrong...he will be free to think about what he means and not worry so much about the way he is saying things, a worry that almost inevitably cuts him off from his best grammatical intuitions (Shaughnessy, 1977: 79).

Common language errors that have been identified by the teacher and grouped according to error type (e.g. subject verb agreement or tense) are presented to students and corrected together so that students understand why there is a need to change a particular sentence or word. Perera points out that proofreading will not help with errors of this kind as they will need an "explicit demonstration of how the attempted construction should be formed" (Perera, 1988: 268). Students choose at most two language items with which they have had difficulty in the past and ask a fellow student to find examples of bad practice in these areas in their work and to suggest changes.

It is hoped that once students have developed enough of a feel for identifying these weaknesses in others' essays, that they will become objective about their own writing practices. Shaughnessy suggests that one way of doing this is for the teacher to project the student's essay on a screen "so as to produce for him a new visual perspective" or to ask students

to read their papers out loud and to correct whatever sounds wrong (Shaughnessy, 1977: 154).

A major intention of revision and editing activities is to break down the power relations that exist between teacher and students. Students are given responsibility for large areas of their learning and actively consider their own and other students' work. Even if the teacher is the key assessor when the final draft is handed in, there will be clarity as to why the student has gone wrong.

In this paradigm, students are not merely assessed on the basis of external standards and technical accuracy as in the product approach. Writing is evaluated in terms of how well it fulfills the writer's intentions. Teachers need to be

wary of substituting (their) stylistic preferences for those of (their) students, riding (and writing) roughshod over the student's meaning in the interest of grace or economy or ferreting out errors without commenting upon or even noticing what the writer is getting at, as if thought were merely the means for eliciting grammatical forms (Shaughnessy, 1977: 84).

In this approach, however, writing forms and structures are not discounted altogether as is the case in some process approaches and language issues are treated with rigour when they disrupt the communication of meaning.

Perera has quoted studies which show that older and more able

students are "more aware of the possibility of revising a written text" than their less proficient counterparts who were "more concerned about producing a neat, error-free end-product" (Perera, 1984: 209). The only problem, particularly within the constraints of the school curriculum, is how to create the space to institute a system which turns students' attention from

superficial surface characteristics of their drafts to the underlying deep structure - and hence (since the composing process is dialectical) to the structure of their thought processes (Coe, 1986: 306)

Smith argues that students need demonstrations of the potentialities of rewriting and editing. This means cutting down on the number of writing assignments set and giving students an opportunity to spend more time generating material and strategies (Coe, 1986: 298). Students could be motivated to publish their final products in various forms such as magazines or on bulletin boards or to use them in other subjects to develop a sense of purpose and real motivation.

3.7 Function and Audience

In the synthesis approach, students need to grapple with many of the difficulties themselves so that they have a greater chance of coming to grips with what they want to say as their ideas change and develop. This process is facilitated if students are writing in terms of their own interests and

experiences even though it is not possible for all topics to be negotiated. The requirements of a particular essay can be discussed beforehand with the teacher as it is unfair to expect students to have a clear writing intention if teachers are vague and do not specify their own teaching purposes. It is hoped that the gulf between teachers and students will be bridged in this way as the academic world is made meaningful to students by "engaging in a kind of meaning-making that excludes no one, no matter what their experiences, no matter what their cultural frames" (Zamel, 1987: 710).

As we ask ourselves questions about our students' writing processes, we are much more likely to examine our own teaching and ask ourselves whether the particular task or assignment has been sufficiently clarified, whether it matches with our students' intentions, whether it connects with what our students already know (Zamel, 1987: 710).

Success in essay writing is seen to be the reconciliation of the institutional and personal conceptions of the task. This is problematic when there is a tension between the two and the institutional requirements disrupt the fluency of students' thoughts.

Students often write expressively in their first drafts as there is a personal interpretation of the subject matter. Later on they give more attention to external expectations. Teachers should be sensitive to students' need to "work through" ideas before assessing whether they have achieved the

specified aim. This links in with Flower and Hayes's contention that writers create goals in two ways: by generating both high-level goals and sub-goals which embody the writer's developing sense of purpose and which can be changed fundamentally based on what has been learned in the act of writing.

When confronting a new or a complex issue, writers must often move from a rich array of unorganised, perhaps even contradictory perceptions, memories and propositions to an integrated notion of just what it is they think about the topic (Flower and Hayes, 1980: 34).

The task of constantly returning to one's purpose in a piece of writing is difficult, particularly for the inexperienced writer. Students have to develop the "technology for holding vast and complex units of thought together" (Shaughnessy, 1977: 233).

There is a recognised need in this approach to provide a range of writing tasks for students related to their developmental level. "Books, magazines, newspapers, letters, announcements, advertisements, programmes, catalogues - all these are demonstrations of how writing is done and essential sources of conventions of written language to which prospective writers must have access" (Smith, 1983: 201).

It is suggested that writing be integrated into the curriculum

so that "the academic content of one course can serve the writing course as well, thereby relieving the writing teacher of the task of fabricating writing situations" (Shaughnessy, 1977: 88). In addition, the subject teachers can encourage students to engage in a process of writing to reinforce this approach. Inevitably, objections will be raised that point to the luxury of such an approach in a mass education situation. Proposals need to be thought out which bear these constraints in mind, such as the length of syllabuses which can be modified to make way for quality writing time. Teachers can formalise peer and group editing so that they themselves are not involved in each phase of the writing process.

A final point about function is that writing is a way of learning and developing as well as a communication skill. Edelsky (1983) argues that the communicative task cannot be imposed by the teacher for the purpose of practicing a function or task if it is not authentic. This relates to Medway's view that writing should be a vehicle for understanding and participating in the community. Students come from a particular framework and relate their own experiences to the writing task. Through the process of writing, thoughts change and develop. "Learning comes about as children find their own questions in real first hand experience and have the opportunity to pursue their investigations in a school setting" (King, 1980: 7).

It has been mentioned in the process approach that writing is a process of thinking and that it is a misconception to think that we simply write out what we already know. It is believed that ideas are first generated and clarified for the writer in a writer-based draft, after which there is a more developed sense of audience and external criteria in a reader-based draft. This development can be facilitated with feedback from others and the "dialogue" one has in one's head about the concepts involved can be externalised and worked through with others. In this way, concepts are clarified, there is a sharper awareness of purpose and a broader conception of readership.

Nevertheless, one cannot take this developing sense of audience for granted and students do need to define their target audience before they start writing. Flower's argument that expert writers make reference to audience many more times than novice writers, should be borne in mind here. This does not negate the process of writing in which thoughts become refined as they develop, but points to the value of knowing beforehand who the writing is aimed at. This is of particular importance in the case of egocentric writers who assume that the reader knows what is going on in their mind and therefore need "no introductions or transitions or explanations" (Shaughnessy, 1977: 240). Shaughnessy argues that the beginning writer is not fully prepared for the audience's criteria for sound reasoning, particularly at an academic level. "But his

awareness of them helps him make sense out of the conventions that govern academic discourse" (Shaughnessy, 1977: 240).

3.8 Methodology

The synthesis paradigm argues for a student-centred approach to the teaching of writing but this does not allow teachers to abdicate responsibility. Instead it is a shift from a teacher-student hierarchical relationship to one in which there is shared responsibility for the development of writing skills. The onus is on teachers to structure activities which allow students to "come to grips" with the requirements of essay-writing. In order to do this effectively, teachers need to encourage students to work on certain tasks collectively and independently of teachers. Flanigan makes the point that traditionally students have been taught only to see what teachers see in their writing.

I contend that although teacher assessment does help students improve their writing, its effectiveness will be short-term unless it is coupled with collaborative group assessment. Through collaboration students learn strategies for self assessment, they do so by learning to take responsibility for other's writing and for their own. Revision techniques become the possession of the student, become internalised (Flanigan, 1986: 314).

Emphasis is placed on breaking the class into small groups which perform various writing and editing tasks. Teachers need

to be aware of difficulties experienced by groups in E.S.L. contexts when they plan group activities. For example, at best, groups operate at the level of the most linguistically advanced student in the group. If this level is not very high then the group will suffer from an unenriched linguistic input. If this level is very high then it may reinforce less able students' feelings of inadequacy as they are not given the opportunity to participate. A major priority is for teachers to facilitate a transfer of understanding from linguistically advanced students to "weaker" students and to ensure that there is equality of sharing.

Various problems emerge from an approach which gives students control over the learning process. Because of previous experiences in the classroom, students are often unused to a situation where they are required to take responsibility for their learning. At Khanya College, in the first part of the year, students expect ready-made formulae for learning and often resist having to be active participants. When students become more used to "figuring things out for themselves" and negotiating procedures in the classroom, they reflect negatively on those experiences which prescribed methods for them rather than encouraged active participation. It took a while for students to work co-operatively and to build upon each other's contributions.

Teachers' feelings of inadequacy as a result of poor training are a related problem. Teachers may counteract approaches which threaten their positions of control in the classroom and cling to traditional teaching methods, even if these are at odds with the development of proficient language skills. Much attention is focused on the principles of rhetoric and the rules of grammar. The result is that "the entire procedure, from abstract principle through after-the-fact criticism, undermines confidence, produces antagonism and often bewilders the average student" (McNamara, 1982: 661).

This problem can be tackled to some extent if teachers realise that "the teacher's best guides are the learners themselves - their interest, creativity, and the amount of writing they willingly or voluntarily do" (Smith, 1982: 203). The material that teachers bring into the classroom should be provisional because of how activities change and develop when students are involved in them. Students' own writing input should become part of teachers' programmes.

Teachers can be part of the learning process as they engage with students about their learning. At times, students may need to see a teacher demonstrate the revision process with the entire class participating. At other times, the teacher acts as a resource person, clarifying concepts for students or sharpening the group's awareness of where the discussion is going. Students thus learn to grapple with concepts and work

out their own strategies for performing tasks and the teacher leads the class through it.

A vigorous argument with a teacher or a classmate over a point of grammar may be a surer mark of progress than a perfect score on an objective test or even an error-free composition (Shaughnessy, 1977: 159).

In the synthesis approach, teachers function as editors who help students to write and who insist that writing be brought to a "level of effectiveness" where it "works" (Coe, 1986: 306). Attention is focused on motivating students, assisting them to generate words and ideas, showing them how to reformulate ideas and edit their work. Teachers confer with students and point out inconsistencies while they write and spend less time marking scripts. This is a major change from teachers' role as judge and critic in the product paradigm. Teachers do not spend their energies on the written product as the only evidence for what has taken place.

CHAPTER FOUR

4

AN ANALYSIS OF TELIP MATERIALS

This chapter is an attempt to use the synthesis approach to the teaching of writing as a tool for examining how the elements of writing are dealt with in the TELIP English Language coursebooks. On the one hand, this will be a measure of how effective such an approach is for analysing course material. On the other hand, it is hoped that some of the insights gained through such an exercise will shed light on both material writing and teaching practice in the TELIP context.

TELIP is an educational project which works primarily with teachers to "develop appropriate processes, materials and structures for English Language improvement" (TELIP document, 1988: 6). TELIP staff see TELIP as an alternative organisation as there is an attempt to teach language in a way that contributes towards learners' empowerment and critical awareness. Learning is therefore an integral part of learners' own reality and interacts with their lives.

TELIP materials are used in combination with tutor training to

extend the skills of both tutors and learners. There has been a recent move towards seeing materials as resources rather than "prepackaged lockstep courses" (Telip document, 1988: 10). The idea behind this is that tutors use the materials selectively so that they move towards greater independence and control. Thus TELIP's responsibility is to develop effective tutor training as well as support structures that allow for a high level of teaching competence. Materials are not seen as compensating for inadequacies in teaching methods.

The main reason for choosing to analyse a project of this nature is that parts of the material appear to be an illustration of the synthesis approach to the teaching of writing. This serves as a consolidation of the previous chapters and will reveal possible shortcomings both in the conceptualisation of the approach as well as in the TELIP material itself. Writing is a large component of the course material and is used by both TELIP "tutors" (called teachers in this research report for consistency) and TELIP students who are themselves teachers, mostly in black schools administered by the D.E.T. and who wish to improve their English language skills. At the same time, students are not dependent on the material because it is assumed that a teacher is present to guide them through the courses. The synthesis approach to the teaching of writing involves constant student interaction and careful monitoring by teachers. It would be extremely difficult to facilitate an effective synthesis

approach when dealing with distance learners who often work in isolation (see 4.8).

This chapter is divided into the same categories as previous chapters to assess how these areas are dealt with in the TELIP coursebooks. The divisions in the chapter are an accessible way of raising issues about the overall approach to the teaching of writing. However, it is evident that there are areas of overlap between the different aspects of writing. These will be pointed out as they emerge.

4.1 Planning

In the TELIP coursebooks, planning is made easier as a result of the emphasis on writing that is related to students' actual experiences. Useful guide questions are provided for students to think through their ideas at the start of the planning process.

Extract 1

Begin by just sitting and thinking about your chosen topic.

- What happened?
- Who was involved?
- How did you feel about it and about the people involved?
- How did it change your life?
- How do you feel about it now, looking back? Have your feelings changed?

(TELIP Coursebook 1: 73.)

Students are encouraged to brainstorm ideas and make extensive

use of tree diagrams (see Extract 3). In this way, students become familiar with the distinction between main ideas and subsidiary points. A connection is made between brainstorming ideas in a tree diagram and imposing order and structure on these ideas as they are numbered and rearranged.

As this course material is used by TELIP tutors, space is created for students to engage in activities that encourage the collective sharing of ideas on particular topics.

Extract 2

In pairs, brainstorm the speech you have chosen, and write down your ideas on a spray diagram. (It will be best if you both write down the ideas you think of.) Do this as quickly as possible, almost without thinking.

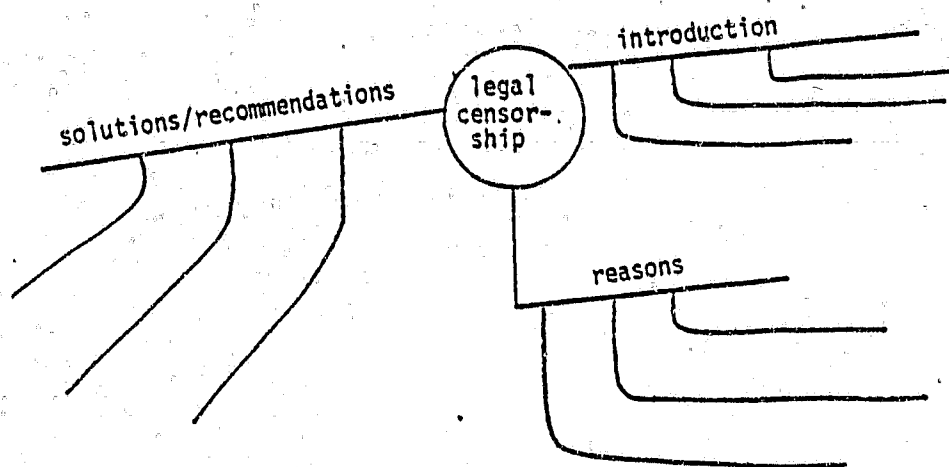
(TELIP Coursebook 5: 85.)

The brainstorming process is facilitated as students have the opportunity to criticise each other's plans. This contributes towards the development of students' thoughts at all phases of the writing process.

Plans are regarded as an essential component of the writing process in the coursebooks. The synthesis approach argues that writing is a drafting process and major shifts in thinking may challenge some of the ideas contained in the plan. Writers should therefore return to their plans to assess how their thoughts have changed in the course of writing and how far they might have strayed from the topic. This flexible approach to planning is not evident in the coursebooks as plans are seen as the major determiners of the content and form of essays.

The TELIP courses provide useful techniques for analysing academic and literature essay questions. A distinction is made between task words and content words which show students how to use and organise relevant information. Often students do not know what is required of them in a particular essay and they produce vague and incoherent answers. The coursebook demonstrates clearly that students should be aware of how their ideas can be linked and developed according to the question. The way the plan is formulated depends on the type of essay. For example, in an argumentative essay, the main reasons with back-up data can be highlighted in the plan.

Extract 3



(TELIP Coursebook 4: 98.)

The writer will have to engage the reader in argument throughout the essay.

It is impressive that students are shown how to adapt planning

procedures to examination conditions. The suggested procedure is: choosing a topic, defining terms, brainstorming with spray diagrams, deciding on point of view and planning the beginning and ending. The essay is seen to be more effective in the long run if planning is done conscientiously. This supports the evidence cited in 2.2.2 about the link between comprehensive planning and good writers.

But it should be pointed out that in exams students generally revise their points as they write, particularly as they are under pressure to focus on a specific topic. The plan cannot be seen as a rigid shaper of what is to come. Students should be aware of their own learning strategies and how they can best be utilised for exam purposes. Prescriptive study skills approaches do not take into account students' experiences of learning. The planning phase should deal with global considerations which focus the writer yet which can be adjusted to suit different writing approaches.

4.2 Grammar

TELIP has moved away from a behaviourist approach to the teaching of grammar as they "no longer have drills which seek to instil habits into the learners" (Tutor training programme, 1988: 14). Language is seen as part of a meaning-making, communicative process and is used in an interactive context. There is an attempt to make language more relevant to

students' lives so that it belongs to them. The teaching of grammar has however not been rejected and is seen as important for study or teaching purposes

It gives learners the ability to talk about the language, to manipulate it for whatever purposes, and to discuss and improve the structure of their writing (a metalanguage) (Tutor training programme, 1988: 15).

It is stated at the start of Course 1 that grammar should not be studied as an end in itself, but should be tackled when necessary to do so. Knowing the grammar of English is not seen to be the same as knowing the language. Grammatical items are selected and are presented in the coursebooks in terms of structure and function. Students go through passages and identify structures that have been covered.

Extract 4

- Read the following passage.
- Underline the finite verbs and circle the verbs which need the help of an auxiliary.

We were sitting on the deck of Mabel Joe's fishboat, leaning against anything we could find to lean on. The summer sun was almost too warm on our faces, and the wind was blowing our hair and tugging gently at our clothes. Shaula's little girl Trina lay on her blanket, sound asleep in the shade of Big Bill's shirt. It was a Hawaiian shirt, with bright green palm trees with red-brown trunks against a red and yellow sky, and it billowed and flapped above her. Peter, Big Bill's different looking son, got him the shirt from a bin in the St Vincent de Paul store in Vancouver when he took his rabbits over to win all the prizes at the Pacific Exhibition. While I personally figured it to be the ugliest shirt I'd ever seen, Big Bill wore it on every possible occasion.

(continued)

My Granny was sitting on the fishbox, her legs dangling down like a little kid on a too-big chair. She was swinging her legs slightly, tapping one foot rhythmically, her face soft, her eyes dreamy, lips moving, making silent words only she could hear.

The soft steady sound of the engine drifted through the snatches of conversation like a tune on a radio nobody was listening to, and behind us the white wake from the big engines bubbled up from the blue water and trailed back to the village like a path.

(Adapted from: Klin Otto, from Daughters of Copper Woman, by Anne Cameron, pp76-77, published by The Women's Press, London, 1981. Daughters of Copper Woman is a collection of legends of the Nootka people of Vancouver Island, Canada.)

(TELIP Coursebook 1: 27.)

This is useful for students and tutors particularly as reference material.

However, the link between students' own writing and the grammatical items dealt with has not been made explicit. The synthesis approach argues that various grammatical rules make no sense unless students are using the language to communicate. Learning about the language is important but should not be taught deductively or in isolation. In coursebook 1, a table of different tense structures is provided for students. This is followed by a number of exercises in which students have to complete tense tables and make comments about the use of different tenses. These exercises are useful particularly as they do relate to

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students' lives, for example, "List all the things that you do regularly, or all the time. Use adverbs or adverbial phrases of time where possible" (Course 1: 93). Such exercises could be made additionally meaningful if they were done in the context of students' own writing.

Students can be encouraged to look for grammatical structures such as finite verbs in their own writing before underlining them in selected passages. An exercise like the one below could be more useful if students write their own dialogues, adverts or poems which involve implied verbs. In this way, they will have a better understanding of why verbs are left out in certain situations.

Extract 5

Implied verbs:

Read the following dialogue between two people, in which an implied verb is used:

Zac: I'm leaving!

Noketula: Please don't!

Notice that Noketula's answer does not contain a complete verb. Don't is not a complete verb, and therefore please don't is not a complete sentence. We know exactly what Noketula means, however, because we understand that she has used an implied verb. In our minds, we can fill in that verb so that the sentence is completed: Please don't leave!

Using implied verbs is very common in spoken language or in written dialogues. Why do you think this is so?

(TELIP Coursebook 1: 31.)

It is true, however, that certain language items such as reference and logical connectors might be more easily linked to selected reading passages than to students' own writing. For example, students can see how joining words function in an extract. They are required to supply their own logical connectors to complete a passage or to put paragraphs in logical order.

Extract 6

The order of the following paragraphs has been confused. Put the paragraphs in the correct order by numbering them 1 - 3, so that they make up a newspaper story.

SA wants to release Mandela — report

London

In both interviews the black nationalist leader was portrayed as "a responsible, dignified and almost statesman-like figure who wants peaceful change, and in both he made it clear that he wanted his views relayed to the white authorities."

☐

The South African Government wants to release Nelson Mandela, claims *The Times* diarist. This is the reason it has allowed two wide-ranging interviews with him by foreigners.

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The South African Government has pressing reasons for wanting to release Mandela, adds the *Diary*. "Not only are they terrified of him dying in prison - but his release now could help defuse the present country-wide violence."

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In this way students develop a grasp of how ideas are related to each other. They can then read their own passages out loud for the group to identify the logical connectors and discuss what they are signalling.

At the end of Course 1, a suggestion is made that a grammar book be compiled which separates grammar from the various courses to function as a reference book. There is a danger that this could be viewed as a sequence of prescriptive lessons. As mentioned in the synthesis approach, a framework of grammatical features can provide teachers and students with the knowledge they need. This does not mean that grammar should be formally taught in isolation from language as a whole. Coe criticises the "Back to the basics" movement which advocates returning to grammar drills despite

70 years of research which demonstrate overwhelmingly that isolated teaching of grammar skills has little or no transfer to use in actual writing (Coe, 1986: 281).

If all the language items are grouped together into course-books, it must be made clear to students that grammar should only be dealt with when there is a need to do so. The synthesis approach views the identification of error as an editorial rather than a composing skill and peer and group grammatical editing is relegated to the final stages of the composing process. Students could use the language items in the coursebooks selectively to monitor their own and each

other's work rather than work through the sections chronologically. TELIP's current attitude towards materials as resources rather than packages favours such an approach though the connection between the material and students' own writing could be elucidated in more detail.

4.3 Error

TELIP's view on error will become clear when revision is dealt with as this is an indication of how different types of error are viewed and at what point in the writing process they are addressed. What becomes apparent in the material though is that students are obliged to provide good reasons for errors they identify in passages. "Pick out any sentences in the passage which you think are incomplete and underline them. Say why you think they are incomplete" (Course 1: 23).

However, even if students are aware of what error they are looking for in the passage, one wonders if this is the appropriate place for such an activity. These exercises are part of a section on complete and incomplete sentences and are useful in themselves. But, as has been pointed out in 4.2, activities of this nature could be more useful in the context of students' own writing. Once students have performed a language edit on each other's work, focusing on incomplete sentences, such exercises facilitate transfer of this concept to their own writing.

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