

The University of Birmingham

Centre for English Language Studies

MA Applied Linguistics

Module 5 Assignment

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Process Writing

LT/08/09

Collect a small number of samples of your students' writing (5-6 *short* pieces, preferably of different types). Discuss the difficulties they appear to have writing in English, and discuss how a *process* approach to writing might help them.

1. Introduction – Receptive and productive skills

The acquisition of a language, whether our native tongue or a second language presumes a process in which both receptive skills (listening and reading) and productive skills (speaking and writing) intervene to affect and complement each other simultaneously. It is through the integration of these four separate skills that learners' language performance is comprehensively strengthened to attain the desired communicative competence, in other words, the ability to communicate effectively, both orally and in writing, to use language according to the parameters imposed by the speech community in which they are inserted. According to Hyme (in Widdowson, 1989:132), who coined the term communicative competence, these parameters not only involve the knowledge of composing sentences correctly according to grammatical rules but also the possibility, feasibility and appropriateness of the utterance.

This interactive nature of communication closely intertwines listening and speaking skills together as they are usually the function through which the ability to perform in another language is measured (Nunan, 1999:225), just as reading and writing go hand in hand and demonstrate that the learner is part of a literate society. However, not all four skills are regarded as equal. While speaking and listening are the starting points in the acquisition of a language and are learned naturally, writing and reading are 'culturally specific, learned behaviours' (Brown, 2001:334) which are acquired only if someone is taught, much like the ability to swim. Brown (2001) and writers like F. Scott Fitzgerald make analogies of the difficulties of writing to those of swimming, for even though one may learn to swim and to write this does not imply that the skill will be mastered, even if one is proficient in a language. Writing is not a spontaneous skill or acquired easily, in fact, it is viewed as 'probably the most difficult thing to do in language' (Nunan, 1999:271). While speech allows the user to exploit various devices such as body movement, gestures, facial expression, tone of voice, pitch, hesitation and stress to facilitate communication, this is not available to the writer. Nor can the writer clarify, revise or backtrack ideas when there is miscommunication or misunderstanding between reader and writer (Hedge 2005, 7). Writing to be effective is dependant on a number of features which are not shared by spoken language, not only in terms of linguistic and pragmatic features but also the context in which it will be interpreted (Nunan, 1999). Writing is a 'complex, cognitive process that requires sustained intellectual effort over a considerable period of time' (Nunan, 1999:273) as, according

to Hedge (2005), there is a need to organise the development of ideas or information; ambiguity in meaning must be avoided through accuracy; the writer must choose from complex grammatical devices for emphasis or focus; and finally, they must pay attention to the choice of vocabulary, grammatical patterns and sentence structures to create a feasible meaning and an appropriate style to the subject matter and reader.

This essay will provide a brief overview of process writing and how the various stages involved in process writing may be used to address some of the previously mentioned features to help develop students' writing skills. Subsequently five examples of students' writing will be analysed to assess difficulties and I will then try to suggest how the process of generating ideas, drafting and revising may provide some possible solutions to the highlighted difficulties. The five examples include different text types and patterns such as an informal letter – Text 1 (Appendix 1), a comparative and contrast essay – Text 2 (Appendix 2), a descriptive essay – Text 3 - (Appendix 3), an opinion essay – Text 4 -(Appendix 4) and a formal letter – Text 5 - (Appendix 5). Some of these texts are exam specific tasks and they have all been written by intermediate (B1+) level students, a level in which students are expected to express themselves effectively in writing.

2. Writing – an overlooked skill

The complexity of factors involved in effective writing would presume that a substantial amount of time is dedicated to writing in language programmes. Nonetheless, as White and Arndt (1991:1) point out, 'it has tended to be a much neglected part of the language programme', despite the power of writing as a permanent record, as a form of expression and as a means of communication. It would seem that, in general, this may still be very true today for a number of reasons, and when I refer to writing, it is the writing of whole texts, not writing which is mainly used to assist in the learning of new structures or vocabulary on a sentence level, used by teachers to monitor and diagnose students' problems (Hedge, 2005:10).

In the era of communicative teaching, it is possible that communicative competence is often misunderstood as only referring to oral skills when in fact communicative competence involves all four skills in language, and writing (of whole texts) may often

be neglected by teachers and students for all the wrong reasons: Students in the main consider writing to be important but regard writing assignments as “tedious” mainly due to:

- the design or purpose of writing activities in coursebooks and their unrealistic or non-authentic nature;
- the non-interactive nature of the activity;
- finding the process of generating ideas difficult;
- finding the process of organising ideas difficult;
- not enjoying it when they have limited time to complete assignments, as in exam situations

(based on answers to questionnaire carried out with 20 intermediate (B1+) level students – see Appendix 6).

Teachers on the other hand, often pressed for time to complete a set programme, may in many instances cut writing assignments or relegate them to homework. It is interesting to verify that writing assignments are often found at the end of each unit in coursebooks and may on occasions have a weak or non-authentic contextual link to the unit. Perhaps this sub-consciously influences teachers to send them as homework assignments with little or no prior discussion in class to provide support or a framework that will aid students to generate ideas. Teachers may also find that they have very little direct control over how students write, due to the intricate nature of writing. Despite spending a substantial time correcting, making suggestions, teachers verify that over time very little improvement occurs. Students repeatedly make the same mistakes, whether these are linguistic or structural.

3. Process writing

If the teaching of writing was divided into separate stages to reflect the various moments involved in the process of writing then perhaps many of the obstacles experienced by both students and teachers could be addressed. Writing practice in the classroom however, is often taken up for display purposes, to assess if students have learned language structures taught in class and for examination purposes. Here, the teacher is concerned with the final product of writing: an essay, a report, an article or story, based on standard models; that these meet the standard English rhetorical style; and are grammatically correct and organised in a conventional manner (Brown,

2001:335). Thus writing is apparently used to promote language learning, through models, rather than to encourage creativity and communication and language acquisition. To an extent, students simply have to follow a structure that has been provided, ‘copy’ the main structures and ‘fill in’ the rest depending on the context or writing task. An example might be a commercial letter, *I’m writing to inform you that...*, or report which are made up of pre-set expressions and sentences. Good writers will manage without any real difficulty and will know how to include more detailed information, whereas weak writers will limit themselves to the pre-set structures and will not learn nor practice how to develop ideas and put these into words.

Process writing may be a more effective method of teaching writing as it helps students to focus on the process of creating text through the various stages of generating ideas, drafting, revising and editing, a number of activities which can be represented as in Figure 1.

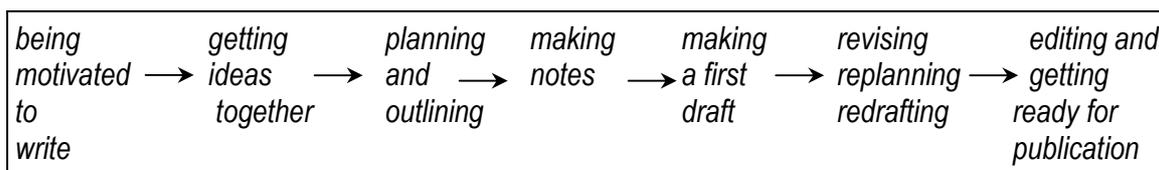


Figure 1 – Stages involved in process writing (Hedge, 2005:51)

White and Arndt (1991:3) describe writing as a

form of problem-solving which involves such processes as generating ideas, discovering a ‘voice’ with which to write, planning, goal-setting, monitoring and evaluating what is going to be written as well as what has been written and searching for language with which to express exact meaning.

In a simplified manner, Figure 2, tries to demonstrate the complex and recursive nature of writing and the interaction between the different operations which may occur simultaneously (White and Arndt,1991:4; Hedge, 2005:50). Our cognitive process or thinking is not linear. However, writing is linear and a writer must know how to organise his/her thoughts and message in an appropriate manner. Many writers often do not know what they want to write beforehand and many ideas are only revealed once the writer has started. They then move backwards to revise and change words or structures before they move forwards and they continue doing this until they are satisfied with the

end result. Thus, writing is a ‘process through which meaning is created’ (Zamel, 1982,195).

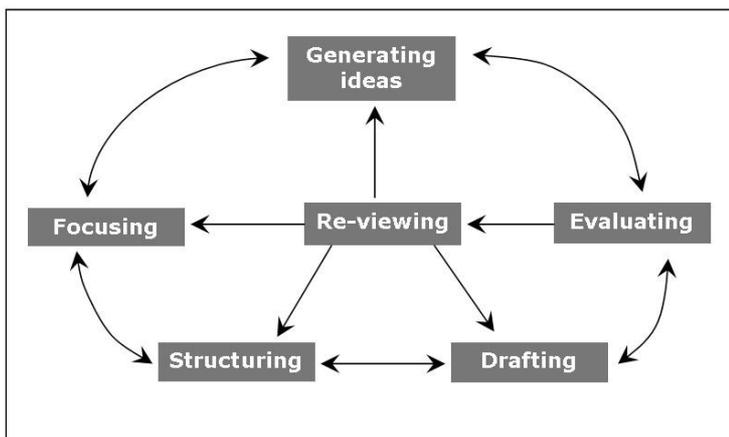


Figure 2 – A model of writing (White and Arndt,1991:43)

It is possible that teachers assume students know how to organise their ideas and write as they have ‘picked it up’ in their reading or they have transferred the skill from L1. This may pose a problem as not all languages (and cultures) follow the same patterns of written discourse. Much contrastive rhetoric research has focused on these differences to aid writing teachers (Brown, 2001:338). Since writing involves a process of ‘generating, formulating and refining one’s ideas’ (Zamel, 1982:195), writing practice in class should reflect the same process where attention and adequate time is provided for revision and re-drafting while the teacher intervenes throughout the whole process.

3.1 Generating ideas

Many reading activities or lessons include pre-reading tasks with the aim of activating learners’ background knowledge (schema). This is a top-down approach which aids students to predict the type of information they will encounter and will help them interpret the text, as readers will only have to concentrate on what they do not know. The same concept should be used in writing. Lessons should try to take an organic and experiential approach, in other words, allow students to put into practice what was taught, or discussed in class, with authentic or semi-authentic tasks. One activity naturally flows into the next. The first part of the lesson may almost be considered the pre-writing stage to develop ideas. An example might be a descriptive essay which follows a lesson or section on adjectives. An opinion essay could follow a class discussion about a specific topic. Another good pre-writing activity is the use of

brainstorming, especially if we consider the complexity of writing and how generating ideas is an essential stage in the writing process (White and Arndt, 1991:17). The objective of brainstorming is to stimulate the imagination to produce ideas on a topic or problem. This is particularly useful for those less imaginative students who do not exercise their creative abilities frequently and thus find it difficult to generate or recall encyclopaedic/world knowledge and link ideas together. Is it not possible to assert that like many other skills, creativity and imagination must be developed through practice? Text 2 (Appendix 2) is a clear example of the difficulty in generating ideas as the student limited himself to mentioning the items stated in the task assignment. The writer did not provide any additional detailed information or develop the topic further. No motivation to write is present. This text resembles more the act of note taking than it does a final draft as paragraphs have not been structured nor have the ideas been developed appropriately.

Travelling by train on holiday has many advantages, but on the other hand it has many disadvantages.

The cost depends on the train. If we are talking about a TGV, of course is more expensive than an ordinary train.

If the travelling is to long, you can meet nice and kind people. Other advantage are the waiters. They are very polite and sympathetic.

Moreover, trains are, in my opinion, the most comfortable vehicules.

One of the disadvantages are the WC, sometimes, they are not very clean and the poop are left to the train away, and it's disgusting.

To sum up, trains are very environmental friendly, because they can transport many people only on one time.

White and Arndt (1991:18) suggest that brainstorming should be unhindered and non-critical to promote productivity and creativity. Brainstorming should be used to identify purpose and audience (if these are not pre-set), to develop the topic and the organisation of ideas. One of the reasons why this student was unable to perform to set standards may have been the lack of purpose or audience in his writing. He did not know who he was writing to nor why. If the set task had stated something similar to: *'the school is planning a trip to Paris. Despite many requests to fly we would prefer to travel by train. Please provide a list of advantages and disadvantages of travelling by train on holiday to present to the student council.'* the task would have been facilitated and the writer might have compared and

contrasted the train with other means of transportation. The statement could have motivated the writer to ponder more on his/her development of ideas.

Another example of insufficient brainstorming ideas is Text 4 (Appendix 4) in which the student writes very superficially about life in the city and country and does not provide any supporting detail.

In the city we have so many oportunities to study, to work, to have a better and maybe briliant future. In city we have more than one school. And also children and all people have sport to do, and a lot of activities.

Any type of writing we do in real life is for a purpose with a reader in mind, thus the interactive nature of written texts is implicit. For this reason any type of writing task should stipulate **why** the student is writing to fulfil some kind of communicative purpose, whether stimulated or real, and **who for**, to provide a sense of audience, hence providing a context. Hedge point outs that when the context is explicit, students write more effectively and appropriately (2005:11). The sense of audience and purpose will influence the writer with his/her choice of content, style/genre and will determine other lower-end choices such as vocabulary and grammatical forms or how information will be ‘packaged within a sentence’ (Nunan, 1999:272) thus taking a top-down approach to writing. I attempt to make a visual display of how lower order choices are determined by higher order one in the figure 3 below.

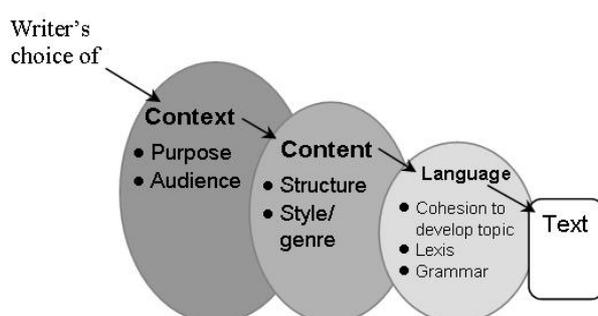


Figure 3 – Top-down choices

Text 1(Appendix 1), an informal letter to a friend, also demonstrates that the writer did not take the audience into consideration, despite this being stipulated in the set task.

Dear Barbara,

I live in the centre of a town called Viana. My flat is near a fantastic bowling club and I love playing bowling!

Usually, I play bowling in the evening, after school, and in the weekends, with my friends. Sometimes, I also play bowling with my family but, of course, I always wine!

I have joined a club too, called "Super Bowling Club". There I can play with many good bowling players and learn many things. Someday, if you want, you can come and play with us! You will see that it's great!

I am waiting for you, Gonçalo

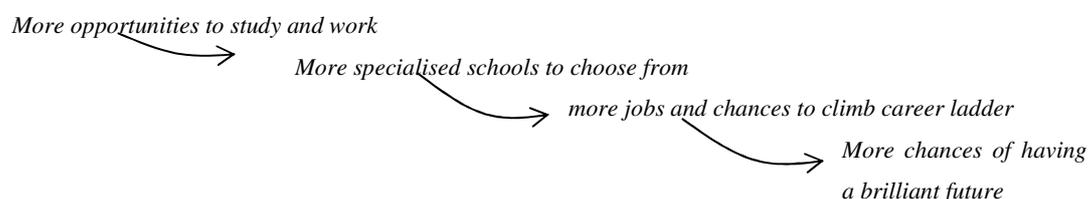
If Barbara is a friend then clearly she will know where the writer lives. In addition to not mentioning the letter that was received in the opening of the letter, the student is providing information which is shared (common knowledge) and thus unnecessary. As the student did not take the audience or purpose into consideration, this influenced the structuring of the letter – the paragraph ‘*I have joined a ...*’ should really be in the first or second paragraph. It also influenced the choice of vocabulary: this is an informal letter between friends, it should ‘sound’ chatty as if the student was talking to Barbara. This could have been accomplished with discourse markers and fillers such as ‘well’, ‘by the way’, ‘you know’ instead of the ‘usually’ and ‘sometimes’ which make the letter sound more like a description of a daily routine exercise. This demonstrates how choices from the top-end affect lower-end consequences.

Another equally important outcome of brainstorming is that it encourages interaction among students and teachers. Communication takes place within the classroom for a real purpose – to solve a problem, gather information, whether the brainstorming is executed with the whole class or in groups. Willis (1990:59) argues in favour of ‘language for real communication’ as students present their ideas with no pre-determined language, they choose what to say and how to say it - choice is the essence of communication. Thornsbury (1996:282) also states that communication initiated by students to negotiate meaning promotes learner involvement. It would seem to lead to more learning as students are paying attention to and are more responsible for the activity, transforming the activity into a student-centred task which according to White and Arndt (1991:20), promotes a cooperative approach to learning.

A simple method to prompt the process of brainstorming, to be used individually or in group, might be the use of simple questions such as ‘Who’ ‘What’ ‘Where’ ‘When’ ‘Why’ and ‘How’ along with other more complex ones. The use of a *Why?* and *How?* could have prompted more detailed information for *In the city we have so many oportunities to study, to work, to have a better and maybe brilliant future* in text 4.

3.2 Focusing, structuring and writing the first draft

After the initial stage of brainstorming, student gather their ideas and subsequently select and outline them to write the first draft. As a follow-up of brainstorming White and Arndt (1991) and Hedge (2005) suggest the technique of fast-writing (free-writing) and loop writing. The purpose of free-writing is to write without any inhibition concentrating more on content rather than on form. With loopwriting the student writes about one idea, then summarises that stretch of text in one sentence. This sentence then leads to another loop. This technique could help students avoid vague statements, the repetition of ideas and help to produce natural flowing text. An example for text 4 might be:



Concentration must be paid to the global organisation of the text depending on the purpose, as information must unfold in a structured form in order to achieve coherence. Students must be made aware of this. A good idea to help those who have problems organising their thoughts might be to make a visual plan for the text. Most of the problems due to structuring in text 1 – informal letter - (Appendix 1) could have been avoided during a drafting stage with explicit reference to patterns of discourse organisation in class and adequate feedback from classmates. The prior choice of a discourse pattern might have also influenced the choice of vocabulary items, as particular words have a tendency to occur with particular text-patterns (top-down choices) (McCarthy,1991:82).

Possible structures may include:

- Problem – solution

- General – specific
- Claim – counterclaim
- Question – answer
- Cause and effect
- Chronological order

The text is usually divided into introduction, body paragraph(s) and conclusion. In addition to being aware of the possible text structures, students should be aware that effective paragraphs contain good topic sentences which introduce what the topic is about as well as the purpose of the paragraph, and these should be written in such a way as to attract the reader's attention. These are then followed by supporting sentences which develop the topic. It would seem that *In the city we have so many oportunities to study, to work, to have a better and maybe brilliant future.* is the topic sentence in text 4 but this is not supported by the following sentence. *In city we have more than one school. And also children and all people have sport to do, and a lot of activities.* No extra information is provided as to why there are more opportunities in the city. The same also happens in text 2.

This is a clear problem in texts 1, 2 and 4 where the writers have 'solitary' sentences standing on their own. This may be due to an influence from students' L1 and should be addressed as it is quite common among weaker writers. An opportune moment may be during the revising stage of process writing, as a class activity to raise students' awareness that paragraphs should be long enough to develop an idea, and that one sentence paragraphs are rarely used, and are usually emphatic.

3.3 Revising and redrafting/editing

Revising is part of the writing process which entails assessing what has already been written and is an important source of learning (Hedge, 2005). Sommers (1982:154 in Zamel, 1985:96) states

We need to sabotage our students' conviction that the drafts they have written are completed and coherent. Our comments need to offer students revision tasks ... by forcing students back into chaos, back to the point where they are shaping and restructuring their meaning.

This is one of the most crucial and beneficial stages in the writing process, when the most meaningful learning will take place that will aid students in future writing as they will have the opportunity to receive feedback while the experience is still 'fresh in the

mind' (Hedge, 2005: 121). In general, students receive feedback from teachers days after the writing task has been completed, mistakes are highlighted and corrected, suggestions for improvement are provided. In certain occasions students may be 'spoon-fed' and this may account for why there is no real improvement in subsequent drafts or writing tasks. The teacher has done all the work, consequently learners do not mentally correct their mistakes as meaningful learning may not have taken place.

Once again there is an opportunity to transform this task into a student-centred activity thus promoting real communication amongst students. Students may work in pairs or groups and correct, provide feedback on each other's text. This collaborative work generates discussion and activities which may increase students' awareness of problems they may have in their own writing when they have to clarify ideas or expressions used in the text (Hedge, 2005:122). By providing students with the opportunity to correct and provide feedback on their classmates' texts, they are learning by doing and as Hedge points out (2005:18), 'accuracy work which is comparatively spontaneous' is 'certainly more meaningful and motivating'. Through peer-correcting, there is also less of a chance of the teacher misinterpreting and dictating students' intentions by correcting with what the teacher thinks is best and which may not necessarily be what the student originally intended.

During the peer-correcting stage teachers have the opportunity to work face to face with individual students, as everyone is busy doing something. This is an excellent opportunity for teachers to take on the role of 'facilitator', to provide guidance in the thinking process without imposing their own thoughts and beliefs on student's writing (Brown, 2001:340) and an opportunity to diagnose and address specific problem areas. This revising not only addresses such features as form, discourse organisation, paragraph structure, and cohesive devices but encourages students to be more than just mere language learners but rather developing writers (Zamel, 1985).

It is an excellent opportunity for learners to acquire less frequent core vocabulary, which is needed if one takes into consideration that written texts have more lexical density than that of an oral text. Teachers may address such issues as collocations, raise student awareness of the feasible partnership between words and thus help them to make better use of the language they already know and build on it. In addition to

collocations, there are idioms, fixed and institutionalised expression and synonyms for the interchangeable use of words used to enrich the development of ideas, raise awareness on the syntagmatic and paradigmatic relationship between words, the referential, metaphorical and connotational meaning of words and how the choice of words and structures may influence the message, and how to incorporate stylistic resources - a long list of teaching resources which goes beyond the scope of this paper. Linguistic resources which in other teaching situations may not have such a meaningful opportunity to be taught as students will be learning 'by doing'.

Text 2 (Appendix 2) would have benefited from some re-drafting (in addition to those already mentioned above) of vocabulary – especially with the word '*poop*' – an informal word for excrements or faeces which does not belong to the register or genre of a compare and contrast essay. Text 3, a descriptive essay (Appendix 3) would have benefited from a re-drafting session when special attention could have been provided to the use of adjectives to provide detailed sensorial explanations (look, sound, smell, taste, feel) to describe the occasion. The use of more than two adjectives to add detail to phrases such as '*but the green sauce*', synonyms to replace commonly used adjectives within the correct context, for example– 'delectable', 'mouth-watering', 'succulent' or 'delicious' instead of '*marvellous*'; along with stylistic resources such as similes and metaphors could have helped to create a clearer picture for the reader which would have in turn made the essay more interesting to read.

The re-drafting stage would also have greatly benefited text 4 (Appendix 4) to work on such issues as connectors to show support and opposition and/or the use of reiteration. As an opinion essay the student should be aware that it is important to use quantity expressions such as *most, some, a lot of, a little*, in order not to make overgeneralisations and not influence the opinion of others. Institutionalised expressions such as '*hustle and bustle*' of city life and '*peace and quiet*' could have easily raised the range of vocabulary used in the text.

The long run sentences found in text 5 (Appendix 5) would also have benefited from a re-drafting stage. Ideas for this text were pre-set but the writer still had problems with the structuring of ideas and the use of topic and supporting sentences.

The first thing that I complain is that the advertisement said that the hotel where I was staying was in a central location and the advertisement also said that the rooms had view of the river but really the view of the room was just to a car park.

Your advertisement said as well that the price included all meal but I had to pay my one meals and then when I wanted to see a show I had only tickets for one and now for one of my choice has the advertisement proclaimed.

The use of connectors to show contrast ‘*the rooms had view of the river, however, the view.....*’, and connectors to indicate result and for adding information would have attributed a more formal register to the letter. These would have also helped to list the complaints clearly with the complaint detail, instead of having a very ‘chatty’ long-winded text which is not at all appropriate for formal letters, especially one of complaint in which we want the receiver to take us seriously.

To attain a good balance between all the components involved, the amount of planning and revising varies according to the kind of writing that is required. Thus a holiday postcard may be written spontaneously, while the process of writing a letter of complaint to a service provider will resemble figure 4, in which I have included all the interactive stages of process writing. Thus this process may be shorter or much longer depending on the purpose and the audience of the text.

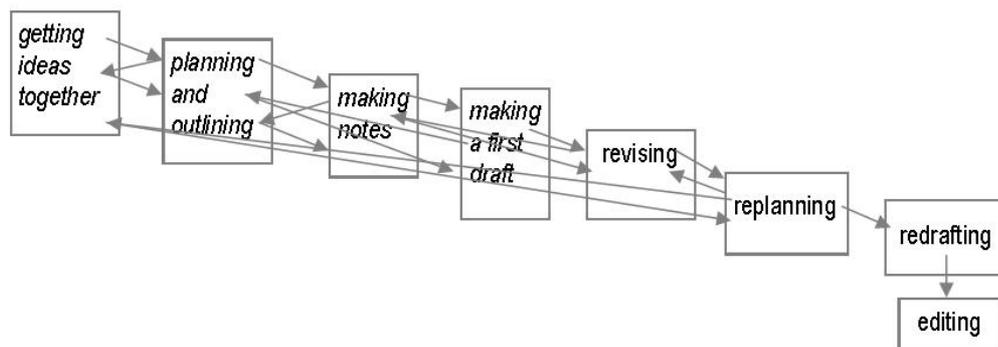


Figure 4 – Interactive stages of process writing

3.4. Quality in writing

All these issues are quite uncomplicated matters, but nonetheless crucial features in effective writing which must be taught and will require plenty of time and practice to

develop. Hedge (2005: 119) divides the quality of writing into two different groups: ‘authoring’ made up of skills involved in the process of writing and ‘crafting’ – skills involved in the appropriate and accurate choice of language . Figure 5 lists the different components included in each group.

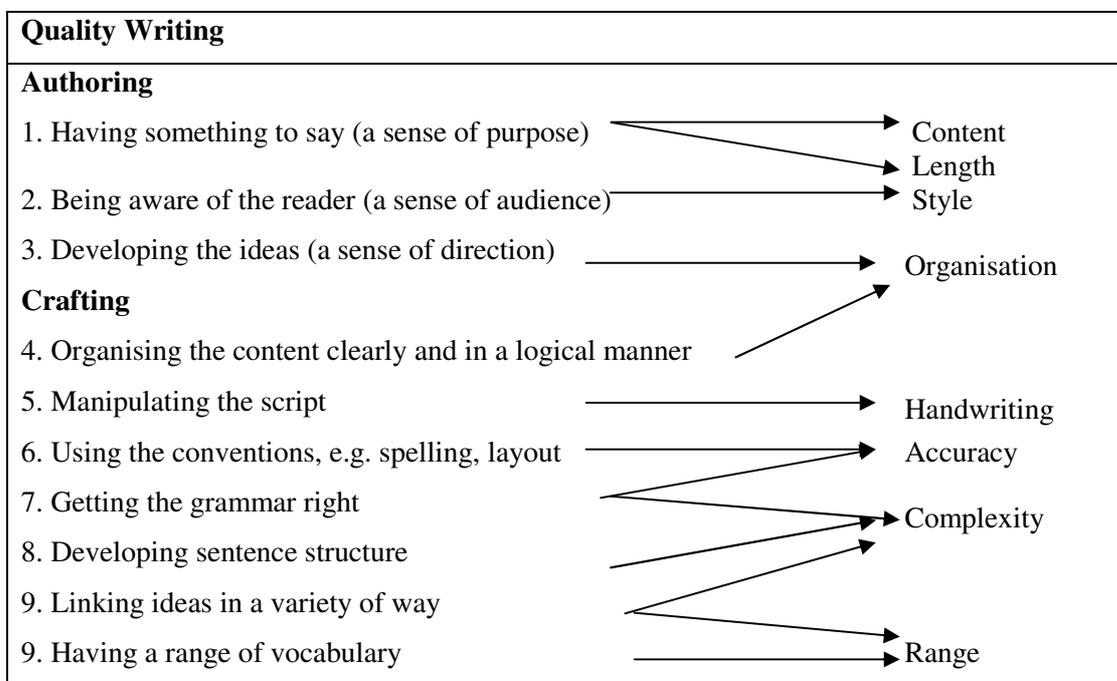


Figure 5 – Quality Writing (Hedge, 2005: 119)

It is interesting to note that criteria set by examination councils to grade written papers are very similar in that they mark for content, organisation, cohesion, register, format and target reader (Cambridge ESOL). Thus, if students learn to develop their skills and writing through process writing, then product writing will improve as well.

4. Conclusion

No one ever learned how to swim by being thrown into the deep end, just as no one will ever learn how to write simply by being told to write. Writers need to write a lot to become good writers and they need the opportunity to practice various types and functions of writing to develop skills and build competence and confidence and progress toward autonomy. The various stages implied in process writing will encourage students to exploit the language resources they possess and build on them as they know they will not be judged or critiqued right away but will have an opportunity to revise, improve and correct before being evaluated. It is through time and practice

and through well planned stages that we may change students' negative views and attitudes towards writing.

The result of process writing activities in the classroom is more than just the mere written text. Through integrated teaching, learners' language competence is comprehensively fostered from different sides so as to develop both receptive and productive skills resulting in an overall improvement of students' language competence.

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Appendix 1

Set Task: Cambridge Esol Pet Exam task(B1 level).

This is part of a letter you receive from your English friend Barbara.

I have just joined a new club – playing computer games! It's excellent!

What do you do in your free time?

Now write a letter to Barbara, telling her how you spend your free time.

Text 1

Dear Barbara,

I live in the centre of a town called Viana. My flat is near a fantastic bowling club and I love playing bowling!

Usually, I play bowling in the evening, after school, and in the weekends, with my friends.

Sometimes, I also play bowling with my family but, of course, I always win!

I have joined a club too, called "Super Bowling Club". There I can play with many good bowling players and learn many things. Someday, if you want, you can come and play with us! You will see that it's great!

I am waiting for you, Gonçalo

Appendix 2

Set Task: What are the advantages and disadvantages of travelling by train on holiday?
Think about cost, meeting people, comfort, convenience, etc.

Text 2

Travelling by train on holiday has many advantages, but on the other hand it has many disadvantages.

The cost depends on the train. If we are talking about a TGV, of course is more expensive than an ordinary train.

If the travelling is too long, you can meet nice and kind people. Other advantages are the waiters. They are very polite and sympathetic.

Moreover, trains are, in my opinion, the most comfortable vehicles.

One of the disadvantages are the WC, sometimes, they are not very clean and the poop are left to the train away, and it's disgusting.

To sum up, trains are very environmental friendly, because they can transport many people only on one time.

Appendix 3

Set task: Write a descriptive essay for a teenage magazine about the first time you tried a new food.

Text 3

During epiphany I normally have dinner at my french neighbour house. In one of this meals she made frog legs. At first, I looked at it like it was an unknown people. I felt strange about those tiny ugly legs. And it had a green sauce on it that didn't seem very tasty too.

Anyway, I'm a person that don't quick at the first challenge, so I had to try the frog legs. I pick one, the tyniest I think, and I started to eat. At the first bite I realised that what seemed disgusting was marvelous and really, really tasty! Actually, the legs had an interesting flavour: they seemed like chicken, but the green sauce make them better. I ate it until there were no more on the place.

In the next year, she cooked frog legs again. On that night, I didn't waste time looking at them wondering if I should eat or not, while the other people were eating them all.... Because, after all, I wasn't the only person who loved this delicacy!

Appendix 4

Set Task: you have recently had a discussion in your English class about places to live. Now your teacher has asked you to write an essay, giving your opinion on the following statement.

Whatever your age, life in the country is always better than life in the city.

Text 4

I don't agree with this sentence. I think that is very good live in country but just for holidays or weekends. In the city we have so many oportunities to study, to work, to have a better and maybe brilliant future. In city we have more than one school. And also children and all people have sport to do, and a lot of activities.

Once that country we don't have all this thinks. We don't have diferent jobs. The country don't has university and just has a school of a large area because there are just a few children. And some of them have to walk long distances from home to school. The life is more complicate.

I know that in city we don't have the quality of life with lots of trees and fresh rivers, animals running in the fells. We also need that, and we can have in holidays.

City is the best place for a good future.

Appendix 5

You recently had a short holiday in a large city which you booked through a company called Citibreaks. You were very disappointed with the holiday. Read the CitiBreak advertisement for the holiday you booked and the notes you have made. Then write a letter to CitiBreaks, explaining what the problems were and telling them what you want them to do.

Citibreaks

Enjoy a short holiday in the capital city.

We offer two nights' accommodation in a four-star hotel in a central location. **Not central – long way out!**

All rooms have their own bathrooms, and a view of the river. **View not river – only car park**

The price of £150 per person includes all meals as well as a ticket for a show of your choice in one of the city's leading theatres. **Dinner cost extra**
No choice of show

This will be a real holiday to remember! **Refund – half cost?**

Write a **letter** of between **120** and **180** words in an appropriate style. Do not write any postal addresses.

Text 5

Dear Sir/Madam

I am writing this letter to complain about the vacation that I had recently that was organized by citibreak, besides been poorly organised the advertisement had many incorrect information.

The first thing that I complain is that the advertisement said that the hotel where I was staying was in a central location and the advertisement also said that the rooms had view of the river but really the view of the room was just to a car park.

Your advertisement said as well that the price included all meal but I had to pay my one meals and then when I wanted to see a show I had only tickets for one and now for one of my choice has the advertisement proclaimed.

I was really looking really forward for this holiday and it turned out to be a complete fiasco so I think that citibreak at least refund me half of the cost.

I look forward to hear from you soon

Appendix 6

Questionnaire

I am doing some research on the topic of writing and how students feel about it. Please be sincere. Thanks for your participation. ☺

Your opinion is important!

1. What is your opinion on writing in school? (please tick appropriate box)

- something pleasant to do
- depends on the task/topic
- difficult

2. Do you consider yourself good or bad at writing? (in English)

- good
- average
- bad

3. And in Portuguese?

- good
- average
- bad

4. Please provide some justification for your answer

5. If appropriate – what are your main difficulties?

- spelling
- lack of vocabulary
- organisation of ideas
- structuring (*dividing the information into paragraphs*)
- grammar structures (*verb tenses, preposition, sentence structure.*)

6. Do teachers in state school help you with writing strategies (*the aspects mentioned in the previous question*) ?

- No
- Yes - Which ones _____

7. What types of exercises/activities do you do in class to work on these?

8. Is writing important?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know If appropriate state why _____

9. Is it something you can improve with practice

- Yes
- No

10. Do you find writing classes to be boring ?

- No
- Sometimes depending
- Yes

State why _____

Questionnaire Results

<i>Question No.</i>		<i>Results</i>
1	Something pleasant to do	4
	Depends on the task/topic	11
	difficult	5
2	Good	1
	Average	14
	bad	5
3	Good	6
	Average	9
	bad	5
4	Lack of vocabulary / spelling / read a lot/ lack of imagination	
5	Spelling	5
	Organisation of ideas	9
	Grammar structures	3
	Lack of vocabulary	10
	Structuring	2
6	No	14
	Yes	6
7	Analysing examples/worksheets / structuring paragraphs / examples of structures	
8	Yes	20
	No	0
	Don't Know	0
9	Yes	20
	No	0
10	No	5
	Sometimes depending	7
	Yes	8
	Why? Non-practical examples / depending on subject /topic / don't like to write	