Barbara Kroll

THE RHETORIC/SYNTAX SPLIT: DESIGNING A CURRICULUM FOR ESL STUDENTS

Any college writing teacher who has read even a moderate number of essays can attest to the fact that writing proficiency exists on several different planes independently. For example, one paper can provide insightful commentary on a substantive topic while replete with problems in spelling and punctuation. Another paper can exhibit a wide range of sentence structures, flawless syntax, adherence to mechanics, yet lack development and support of its central thesis. Still another paper may be hard to read because it lacks a sense of purpose and shows no awareness of audience yet seems to be about an unusual personal experience which the reader is most curious to learn more about. In fact, empirical data from native writers of English show that the level of a student writer's proficiency in one component of writing does not necessarily correlate with his or her proficiency in a different component. For example, George Hillocks discusses the repertoire of knowledge bases that a writer has, e.g., knowledge of lexical, syntactic, and rhetorical forms, and then reviews the findings of several first language studies comparing syntactic features and quality of writing

---

Barbara Kroll, assistant professor of English and linguistics at California State University, Northridge, is also the codirector there of TA training for freshman composition. She has been a frequent presenter at the Conference on College Composition and Communication and the TESOL Convention. She recently edited Second Language Writing: Issues and Options, *an anthology of original articles on second language writing which will appear as a volume in the Applied Linguistics Series published by Cambridge University Press.*

DOI: 10.37514/JBW-J.1990.9.1.07

in *Research on Written Composition* (63–76). These studies illustrate that performance in one area can differ from performance in another.

Such variation in performance is perhaps more extreme for students of English as a second language (ESL). They must operate not only within a complex system of discourse and rhetorical rules that they have had limited exposure to but also according to an entire linguistic system (English) that may be but partially mastered. Even error-free prose by an ESL student often has a very non-native quality about it, as Andrew Cohen observes in his work on helping ESL student writers improve, and as Robert E. Land, Jr. and Catherine Whitley observe in their analysis of the evaluation of ESL essays in regular composition classes.

Cohen has identified a teaching tool known as "reformulation," which is accomplished in a two-stage process. Using an essay written by an ESL student as the starting point, a native speaker first corrects the syntactic and mechanical problems. In the second stage, the native speaker uses the corrected version as the starting point to rewrite the essay, maintaining the ideas of the non-native speaker but recasting them into language and phrasing that a native speaker would use. The second stage is necessitated by the fact that essays with no surface language errors frequently violate other principles of discourse, as Cohen observes. Similarly, Land and Whitley's research suggests that "even when an ESL writer produces an error-free composition in English, a hidden agenda leads the evaluator to find fault with other formal features" (285). This work further supports the claim that writing proficiency in one sphere may be different than writing proficiency in another sphere.

Placement Implications

ESL placement procedures, however, do not take into account variability in different aspects of written performance in assessing student writing. At many universities where there is more than one level of writing course available for ESL students, those entering the program (or completing one of the levels) may be asked to write an essay which forms all or part of a placement procedure to determine which course in the sequence they will be assigned to. These essays are usually then scored by teachers in the program using either a global holistic scale (often with a six-point range) or a more detailed set of scoring guidelines, such as the widely used 100-point ESL English Composition Profile (developed by Holly Jacobs et al.), which has raters assign differentially weighted separate sub-scores in the five categories of content, organization, vocabulary, language

use, and mechanics. Typical holistic scores are derived by asking readers to rate the essay as a whole for adherence to principles spelled out in a set of written guidelines, or rubrics; many rubrics ask readers to factor in such issues as content, organization, and language features at each of the points along the scale, so that no essay will receive a high score that does not show at least a fair amount of control in all three of these areas. While the sub-scores in the English Composition Profile can provide information on student performance in different aspects of writing, the total score provides no more than a general sense of writing competence much as the holistic score does.

A significant problem which neither one of these scoring procedures addresses is the possibility that two essays with quite different characteristics may be assigned the same overall score because of the nature of the scoring system used. For example, a score of "3" on a typical six-point scale can result from weak ability to address the topic at hand and difficulty in finding an appropriate way to structure an essay, or it can result from very weak syntactic control which interferes with comprehensibility of an otherwise well-structured argument. Similarly, a score of, say, 65–70 on the English Composition Profile may result from loss of 10–12 points in content and 7–10 points in organization together with a loss of 2–3 points each in the areas of language use, vocabulary, and mechanics, while another essay scoring 65–70 may have lost 25 points in the areas of language use, vocabulary, and mechanics, a few in organization and a few in content. What this means is that a paper which is weak in some ways and strong in others may receive the same middle-range score as another paper which has both weak and strong points *regardless of how similar or different the areas of strength and weakness are.*

In fact, because the empirical evidence to claim that a writer's grammatical accuracy (which we can also call syntactic accuracy) often exists independently of his or her organizational and discourse competency, we should be concerned with what this means in terms of essay assessment in general. At the 1989 Conference on College Composition and Communication, for example, Mary Kay Ruetten gave a paper discussing characteristics of essays that had been inconsistently scored on placement exams at the University of New Orleans. In most cases, the discrepancies were caused when papers showed clear control over either rhetoric or syntax and noticeable weakness in the other area, which led the raters to difficulty in assigning a holistic score.[1]

Separating Components of Writing

In this paper, I discuss the implications of considering different components of writing separately, which could serve to avoid the scoring problems described above. Nor should we overlook the fact that in addition to problems in scoring which may be present at the placement stage, curriculum problems can also arise when teachers try to address all possible writing problems in the same writing class. (This is certainly true in teaching native English speakers as well.) In the conclusion to his article reviewing the history of the apparent obsession English composition teaching has had with grammatical accuracy, Robert J. Connors points to the great challenge of trying to strike a balance in teaching between what he calls "formal and rhetorical considerations." He goes on to say that, "We [college English teachers] may spend the rest of our professional lives investigating how the balance between rhetoric and mechanics can best be struck" (71).

Rather than "balancing" these components of writing, I would like to propose that we separate them in working to establish curricula for ESL students. I am most concerned with ways to help students achieve what can be termed "rhetorical competency" and "syntactic accuracy." After examining how these terms function to describe different aspects of ESL student writing, I will address the question of how we might structure a curriculum which would offer appropriate options for all students of writing by taking into consideration both their strengths and weaknesses at any given entry point.

Defining "Rhetoric" and "Syntax"

I am using the term "rhetorical competence" to refer to the writer's ability to present an essay that exhibits all or most of the following qualities:

1. The essay limits and focuses on the topic in a manner appropriate to its overall approach and length.,
2. The essay remains focused on the topic throughout.
3. The essay creates and uses paragraphs effectively.
4. The essay maintains a consistent point of view.
5. The essay sequences ideas in a logical manner.
6. The essay uses coherence and cohesion devices appropriately and as necessary.

It is possible to label essays which adhere to all or most of these guidelines as "plus" rhetoric (+rhetoric) in the sense of a kind of

control over discourse structure. Essays which fail to adhere to most of these guidelines can be labeled "minus" rhetoric (−rhetoric). According to Kathryn Fitzgerald, the grading criteria for placement essays at the University of Utah focus on rhetorical properties quite similar to the ones identified above. She argues that the rhetorical problems of basic writers are as fundamental to their difficulties in college writing as their syntactical and mechanical errors, and thus should be specifically addressed in their basic writing courses. However, while the labels above give us significant information about some of the characteristics of a specific written product being evaluated, these labels do not tell us anything about whether or not the essays conform to the guidelines of standard edited English. That is to say, some essays which may be deemed well-constructed from a rhetorical point of view may exhibit frequent, elementary, and/or distracting errors at the level of sentence grammar and sentence construction. Essays which exhibit these problems can be referred to as "minus" syntax (−syntax), while those essays that more or less adhere to the patterns of standard edited English may be labeled "plus" syntax (+syntax). For the purposes of this discussion, then, syntax refers to facility in using the grammatical system of the language.

Varieties of Student Writing

Given the split between rhetoric and syntax, ESL students (not unlike native-speaker writers) fall into one of four general categories of writer based on the relative strength of their syntactical and rhetorical skills. We can use these categories to schematize the type of writing produced by students as follows: (1) +rhetoric/+syntax; (2) +rhetoric/−syntax; (3) −rhetoric/+syntax; and (4) −rhetoric/−syntax.

Skipping over the category of +rhetoric/+syntax, exemplified in any well-written, well-structured successful paper, let us take a look at three essays which illustrate the other categories. Sample Essay #1 is a +rhetoric/−syntax paper.

Sample Essay #1

The Great Transformation

> China is an ancient country. It is famouse in the world because of it's culture for thousands of years, it's vast territory (and) rich natural resouces and large population. But as it is a multiracial country, and it is devided into northern

and southern parts by Young-tze River naturally, it was disunited untill 1949 when the People's Republic of China was established. From that time on, China has been getting richer and richer. Now, everything has been enormous changed in China.

As everybody knows that China has being a famous agricultural country from long long ago. But the strange thing was that there were thousands of farmers sufferring from starvation every years. They grew rice, wheat and vegetables just for the rulers who were living in luxury, but not for themselves or their country. Now, the situation is completely different. The rulers were elected by the people who include various races and farmers. They do everything according to the benefits of the people, especially the farmers who is the ninety per cent of the population in their country. The farmers are no longer poor as they have an integrated organization of allocation which is called people's commune and they have a very complete system of demand and supply. Not only they do agriculture in their farms, but also do industry. In this way, the farmer's life are improve in a high speed.

China was a very poor country in industry (before 1949.) They could not create even a nail. But now, as we know, they have their manmade satellites, and they produce nuclear weapons, aeroplanes, vassels, atomobiles and so on without any foreign aid. Now, every big cities and small towns are industrialized except rural areas.

China is no longer poor and silent. It has being awakening, and getting stronger and stronger.

This paper was written in response to a fairly open-ended topic asking students to write about a significant change in their country. It is relatively well-organized and shows the writer's awareness of how to structure an essay using both chronology and supporting detail effectively. The writer focuses on tracing through some general changes in China since the establishment of the People's Republic, and he skillfully uses the conclusion to strengthen the assertion made in the introduction that there have been enormous changes in China.

In fact, two readers gave this paper scores of 5 and 6 on a six-point scale after being specifically trained to rate essays according to a holistic scale that assigned scores without reference to syntactic features. (The scale is taken from Kroll [1982], and reprinted as Appendix A.) Unlike a scoring guide that amalgamates

rhetoric and syntax, such as the scale used to rate the TOEFL's Test of Written English,[2] this scoring guide identifies properties of organization and coherence solely, or what we might call rhetorical and discourse competence. It says nothing about language control or competence. In that area, Sample Essay #1, which is 303 words long, contains a total of 28 errors—not including spelling—in such categories as sentence structure, singular vs. plural, word form, word order, verb tense, and so forth. The total number of errors averages one to every 10 or 11 words. One error every ten words means that the writer could string together just a few words or phrases before the next breakdown in language control led to yet another error. While few of the errors serve to interfere with one's ability to read and process the essay, they do add up to a kind of "foreign accent" in writing that marks this paper as the work of a non-native speaker. Such a high frequency of error renders this essay "−syntax."

In contrast to Sample Essay #1, Sample Essay #2 is an example of an essay which merits the polar opposite descriptors of −rhetoric/+syntax. This paper was written by an Iranian student asked to discuss the implications of a quotation by Mark Twain about the differences between education and schooling ("I have never let my schooling interfere with my education").

Sample Essay #2

Do Let Your Schooling interfer your education

Hopefully through our schooling we will all gain a great deal of practical knowledge that we can apply to any future profession that we may choose. If one is fairly intelligent and displays a certain amount of discipline, this can be easily done. However, first one must know what it is that they really want to do with their life. Where do I fit into societie's space? What kind of lifestyle do I want? What will make me happy? These are all questions we ask ourselves daily, and these can only be answered through our own education.

Somebody once said: "No man is an island." To me, to live is to love and understand people. One can spend all of his time in school and never have to relate to people. But when that person goes out into the world, he may be the last to find a job, friends, or on to love.

I have learned only through my personal experiences how to communicate with people. Diplomacy and the handling unexpected situations are most important in any profession

and this can only be gained by an awareness that comes from knowing different types of people.

I love sports. They can relieve many frustrations and tension and teach one how to relax. But most important, they should teach many people how to accept losing gracefully. This to me is very important when dealing with all phases of society.

School is a wonderful place to educate oneself. There are many different types of people with different directions, and as long as I continue to explore I am sure that I will have gained more knowledge than I had hoped for in school.

Unlike Sample Essay #1, this essay cannot be summarized easily because the paper seems to lack a clear central focus. Every paragraph seems to set out in a new direction,[3] and in some cases it is quite difficult to see how the topic of a particular paragraph relates to Twain's quote at all. While the writer does use the conclusion to refer back to points made in the introduction, the middle part of the essay seems random rather than planned. In fact, this essay received holistic scores of 1 and 2 from the same two raters using the scoring guide shown in Appendix A, putting it close to the bottom of the scale. But the essay, which had about 20 words fewer than Sample Essay #1, had only 8 errors in its 282 words, averaging out to one error every 35 words. This merits the label, "+syntax." Thus the contrast between these two papers is highlighted in the assignment of "plus" and "minus" features to the two major categories of rhetoric and syntax. The first paper scored very well for organization and coherence features while displaying more than three times as many syntactic errors as the second sample, where weakness was in the area of organization. In fact, despite the greater facility using the grammatical system of the language evidenced in Sample Essay #2, the essay as a whole might seem harder to read than the previous essay because, as Sarah Freedman has pointed out, readers tend to focus on higher order principles, such as content and organization, before focusing on language issues in an essay.

Lastly, Sample Essay #3 illustrates writing which can be characterized as −rhetoric/−syntax. The topic for the diagnostic writing task set for the writer of the following essay (and which was addressed to graduate students only) asked students to discuss some of the major contributions made by their field of study to human knowledge.

Sample Essay #3

[No Title]

There are thousands of languages in the world. Some of them are unknown for the majority of the people, because they are not too common. For example: All the dialects using in Africa. Others are known, but almost nowbody pay attention to them, because they are not fairly common. They are only used in theirs countries of origin. As an example of these, are: German, Dutch, Italian, Portuguese.

Among all these languages in the world, there is a group, which is more common, and everybody is interesting in them. These languages are very important for a professional or businessman, because everyday they are treating with people all over the world. Between these languages, we have Spanish and English, which are the most used.

Spanish is very popular, because all the Latin American countries, except Brasil have it as their language. It is also the second Universal language. English is the most important of all these languages, mentioned before. It is the Universal one, and it is used in almost all the countries as a common language, between the businessmen and scientifics and any professional, who are dealing with people from differrent countries. English nowadays is necessary for any carreer in order to have success in it. Even in many countries, English is teaching as a second language to all High school students.

While it is clear that the writer, a Spanish-speaking student, is extolling the virtues of both Spanish and English, it is not at all clear what her major field of study is; and, in fact, it does not appear that she addresses the question at hand. Even ignoring that as an issue, this essay still lacks a sense of focus, purpose, or audience. It seems to provide a collection of miscellaneous facts about languages without establishing why the author is recounting the information. Had she been able to turn this into a response to the question as posed, she might have been able to create a focus that is lacking here. As it is, this paper received two scores of 2 on the scale shown in Appendix A, slightly above the score the two readers assigned to the overall rhetorical properties in Sample Essay #2. At the same time, the essay has 22 errors in its 222 words, averaging out to about one error every 10 words, a similar proportion to the error/word ratio found in Sample Essay #1. Thus, this essay typifies the writing of students who have trouble controlling either rhetoric or syntax, and hence their writing can be labeled −rhetoric/−syntax.

Making Curriculum Decisions

Having illustrated a range of student performance in the area of rhetoric and syntax, I would like to consider how a writing curriculum could be designed that would offer courses for students who have problems in English exemplified in the sample essays presented above. I suggest that students who produce writing similar to Sample Essay #1 and Sample Essay #2 would be unlikely to profit from being in the same kind of writing course or doing the same kind of classroom practice in order to work on their individual problems in writing and to move forward. But as Ann Raimes noted in her study of two levels of ESL writers at Hunter College, "When placement decisions are made solely on the basis of a holistic analysis of one piece of writing, students with very different needs will be placed in the same course, which may not be appropriate for all of them" (461). In fact the writer of Sample Essay #3 might also be assigned to that same middle-range/intermediate class because while she also has deficiencies in writing it is apparent that she is not without some knowledge of English writing.

However, placement procedures *can* identify which students need to learn rhetoric and which students need to learn syntax simply by scoring their placement essays separately for these two categories. A scoring guide similar to the one shown in Appendix A can be designed to assign a +rhetoric or −rhetoric rating, and a tabulation of major and/or minor syntactic violations can be made simply by counting the actual occurrences of errors. (One might need to keep in mind the proportion of errors to error-free parts.) A syntactic "interpretation" scale could also be drawn up to assign a +syntax or −syntax rating based on the number of errors in proportion to the length of the essay with cutoff ranges keyed to the levels of a particular program. If the students can be identified in terms of their writing strengths and weaknesses, then appropriate courses can be offered which place heavy emphasis on either rhetoric or syntax and do not particularly focus on the other.

I propose that a writing program designed to process students in this manner would have a total of four course offerings. One class would focus on essay stylistics and would be for students who fall into the +rhetoric/+syntax category but who are not yet judged proficient enough to have fulfilled a school's writing requirement. Such students would already be familiar with standard discourse patterns and typical English essay organizational preferences which are shaped by content, audience, and purpose. They would also be the type of competent writers who do not produce many errors in syntax. However, they would probably benefit from a class which

improved their ability to produce the caliber of discourse required in an academic environment. For example, George E. Newell and Phyllis MacAdam argue in "Examining the Source of Writing Problems" that topic-specific knowledge plays a key role in a student's ability to successfully complete a given assignment. And a course that offered a clear content-base and the integration of reading and writing might be the most appropriate approach in ways that Ruth Spack calls attention to. The course I am describing for this population is similar in many ways to a typical freshman composition class when students must meet rigorous requirements for entrance to that level. Such being the case, the so-called stylistics component I am proposing can be offered as a parallel course for freshman composition with enrollment restricted to ESL students, or ESL students can simply enroll in regular sections of freshman composition to fulfill this requirement. Following completion of such work on stylistics (whether in a separate or integrated class), these students would be exempt from further required writing courses.

The second class in the program I am proposing would be a class in what we might call modern rhetoric, and here I think it advisable, though not absolutely necessary, to restrict enrollment to ESL students only. This class could present both "traditional" concepts, such as the modes of organization (e.g., comparison and contrast, and classification), varying the levels of generalization in an argument, focusing on a topic, and providing sufficient supporting detail to meet reader expectations while also presenting its material in a process-centered classroom. Writers need to acquire composing skills they can call upon for each new writing situation, so that they leave the course with a set of strategies to be invoked based on the situation for writing. The goal of learning "rhetoric" in this way is to train students to produce reader-based prose that considers audience and purpose as basic to fulfilling a writing goal. Such training should not foster an obsession with adhering to strictly defined formal properties; rather students need, as Raimes suggests, a classroom which allows students to work with "specific content to generate ideas, plan, rehearse, write, rescan, revise and edit" (461). At the end of such a course, students would have the repertoire of process skills needed to generate appropriate responses to essay tasks, and their written products would reflect control over a full range of rhetorical strategies. If proficient in syntax, students completing the rhetoric course could then enroll in the stylistics (or regular freshman composition) course.

The third class would focus on syntax, and because of the different types of problems native and non-native students have

with syntax, such a course is best restricted solely to ESL students. I do not think, however, that ESL students can benefit from a syntax course unless they have control over rhetoric first so that the course can present syntax as a tool for controlling written language rather than as an object of study. Students who produce writing similar to Sample Essay #1, which shows a fair amount of complexity in terms of vocabulary and content, have usually been through several years of English classes and have had multiple exposures to the rules of grammar. Yet, despite their language study backgrounds, they still are not able to produce prose which is not heavily marked with error. Therefore, when I suggest these students need a course in syntax, I am not advising that they enroll in a class which offers the usual method of providing heavy doses of grammar rules and exercises for practice. Rather, we must explore alternative approaches to traditional grammar lessons if we want to help students at that level to improve, a sentiment echoed by Thomas Friedmann in claiming that "Correctness in grammar . . . can be learned—if the teaching methodology duplicates the learning process" (225), and if the teaching is applied to the students' own work. What we are really after is training students to notice the ways in which sentences or pieces of sentences can break down, providing them with a repertoire of self-monitoring skills and strategies. This is best done through having contextual writing to look at, writing which has been produced by the students and which they have a vested interest in improving. If their writing already shows rhetorical control, they can more easily focus their attention on problems in linguistic control. Here it is quite possible that in a quarter system or with severely underprepared students, there would be need for two terms of syntax. So I am saying that there would be a total of four course offerings: stylistics, rhetoric, and two syntax courses. The chart on page 52 summarizes the entire curriculum.

Figure 1 indicates how the profile of a student determines which course the student is to be (next) placed in, either at placement (shown as "placement profile" on the chart) or after completing one course in the curriculum (shown as "placement after class" on the chart). For example, in this type of writing program, students whose placement essays are similar to Sample Essay #3 could first be placed in the rhetoric class, shown as Sequence D. While in such a class, breaches of syntax can be ignored in the interest of having the student focus on improvement of the ability to develop a personal composing process, present an argument, marshal evidence, consider the reader's needs, find an appropriate voice, and so on. After successful completion of such a course, that student would then fall into the "+rhetoric/−syntax" category and can go on to a

SEQUENCE	PLACEMENT PROFILE/ PLACEMENT AFTER CLASS	CLASS TO BE COMPLETED	PROFILE AFTER CLASS	CYCLED TO SEQUENCE
A	+rhetoric +syntax	STYLE (or EXEMPT)	+rhetoric +syntax	EXEMPT
B	+rhetoric -syntax	SYNTAX (1) SYNTAX (2) (optional)	+rhetoric +syntax	A (or EXEMPT)
C	-rhetoric +syntax	RHETORIC	+rhetoric +syntax	A (or EXEMPT)
D	-rhetoric -syntax	RHETORIC	+rhetoric -syntax	B

FIGURE 1: Structure of Curriculum

class focusing on syntax, which is shown as Sequence B. At the same time, the rhetoric class would also include other students who already have control over syntax, e.g., those who produce writing similar to Sample Essay #2. Then, those students whose profile would be +rhetoric/+syntax at the completion of the course could be cycled into the stylistics (or freshman composition) course if not judged ready for exemption on the basis of program criteria.

The curriculum I propose is designed to alleviate the problem of placing students into classes which may only partially address their needs in terms of two key components of writing. If we are willing to evaluate students based on a separate consideration of their rhetorical and syntactic skills, we can stream them into a workable sequence of courses that would help them improve in their area(s) of weakness and lead them to mastery over writing in general.

Appendix A

SCORING GUIDE FOR ORGANIZATION AND COHERENCE FEATURES

- A 6 paper is a top paper. It does not have to be perfect, but it will do all *or most* of the following well:
  - –clearly limit the discussion to something which can be reasonably handled in a short essay
  - –follow through on what it sets out to do

–stay on the topic throughout the essay and in each paragraph
–effectively use paragraphs to break up the topic into unified parts
–maintain a consistent point of view
–sequence ideas logically within paragraphs and in the essay
–use overt markers/transitions artfully to signal relationships between and within paragraphs
–use reference markers appropriately

- A 5 paper is a less consistent version of the 6 paper. It will be distinctly above average, but will have noticeable slip-ups. The paper may do one of the following:
  –begin discussion without stating or implying overall topic
  –omit a conclusion where called for
  –present the argument in unbalanced proportions to a clearly stated thesis
- A 4 paper shows adequate but undistinguished control over both paragraph structure and essay structure. It is an upper-half paper which shows organizational competence and general coherence, but does one or more of the following:
  –relies heavily on juxtaposition to show relationships rather than spelling them out
  –uses overt transitions in inappropriate ways
  –fails to adequately develop a major point of the argument
- A 3 paper is a lower-half paper. It may show either clear ability to set up the major building blocks of an essay OR clear ability to construct a unified, coherent paragraph, but it will *not* show clear competency in both areas. It may be a paper that shows weak abilities in both areas. Reasons for assigning a 3 include:
  –noticeable introduction of irrelevant ideas
  –failure to provide a clear sense of purpose
  –underdevelopment of main ideas
  –shifting point of view
  –use of transition signals in mechanical or heavy-handed way
  –some inconsistencies in argument
- A 2 paper shows some minimal ability to organize a paper, but is rather poorly presented. It may do some of the following:
  –go around in circles
  –have little or no connection between parts either stated or implied
  –use transitions that don't work in context
  –assume the validity of statements which are never developed
- A 1 paper show little or no skill at setting up major sections of the paper and developing paragraphs. It may stray and wander from the topic or it may simply never get beyond the most superficial

statements so that there is no sense of awareness of expository conventions.

Notes

[1] A full discussion of a range of other issues in the assessment of ESL writing is provided by Sybil Carlson and Brent Bridgeman in their article "Testing ESL Student Writers."

[2] For example, the "6" level scoring criteria begin: "Clearly demonstrates competence in writing on both the rhetorical and syntactic levels" (*TOEFL Test of Written English Guide,* 29).

[3] Insights from the field of contrastive rhetoric raise the possibility that this particular style might stem from a discourse pattern in Farsi, the speaker's native language. For a recent review of the field, see William Grabe and Robert B. Kaplan's article on contrastive rhetoric.

Works Cited

Carlson, Sybil and Brent Bridgeman. "Testing ESL Student Writers." *Writing Assessment: Issues and Strategies.* Eds. Karen L. Greenberg, Harvey S. Wiener, and Richard A. Donovan. New York: Longman, 1986. 126–152.

Cohen, Andrew. "Reformulating Compositions." *TESOL Newsletter* 17 (December 1983): 1, 4–5.

Connors, Robert J. "Mechanical Correctness as a Focus in Composition Instruction." *College Composition and Communication* 36 (February 1985): 61–72.

Freedman, Sarah Warshauer. "Influences on the Evaluators of Student Writing." Diss., Stanford University, 1977.

Friedmann, Thomas. "Response to Carroll Viera, 'The Grammarian as Basic Writer: An Exercise for Teachers,' *CCC* 39 (May 1988): 224–77." *College Composition and Communication* 40 (May 1989): 225–226.

Fitzgerald, Kathryn R. "Rhetorical Implications of School Discourse for Writing Placement." *Journal of Basic Writing* 7 (Spring 1988): 61–72.

Grabe, William, and Robert B. Kaplan. "Writing in a Second Language: Contrastive Rhetoric." *Richness in Writing: Empowering ESL Students.* Eds. Donna M. Johnson and Duane H. Roen. New York: Longman, 1989. 263–283.

Hillocks, George, Jr. *Research on Written Composition: New Directions for Teaching.* Urbana, IL: National Conference on Research in English and ERIC/RCS, 1986.

Jacobs, Holly L., Stephen A. Zingraf, Deanna R. Wormuth, V. Faye Hartfiel, and Jane B. Hughey. *Testing ESL Composition: A Practical Approach.* Rowley, MA: Newbury House, 1981.

Kroll, Barbara. "Levels of Error in ESL Composition." Diss., University of Southern California, 1982.
Land, Robert E., Jr. and Catherine Whitley. "Evaluating Second Language Essays in Regular Composition Classes: Toward a Pluralistic U.S. Rhetoric." *Richness in Writing: Empowering ESL Students.* Eds. Donna M. Johnson and Duane H. Roen. New York: Longman, 1989. 284–293.
Newell, George E. and Phyllis MacAdam. "Examining the Source of Writing Problems: An Instrument for Measuring Writers' Topic Specific Knowledge." *Written Communication* 9 (April 1987): 156–174.
Raimes, Ann. "Language Proficiency, Writing Ability, and Composing Strategies: A Study of ESL College Student Writers." *Language Learning* 37 (September 1987): 439–467.
Ruetten, Mary K. "Holistic Evaluation of Problem Essays in ESL." Paper delivered at the Conference on College Composition and Communication. Seattle, WA, March 1989.
Spack, Ruth. "Initiating ESL Students into the Academic Discourse Community: How Far Should We Go?" *TESOL Quarterly* 22 (March 1988), 29–51.
TOEFL Test of Written English Guide. Princeton, NJ: Educational Testing Service, 1989.