



WORLD QUARTERLY

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Book Review: Teaching L2 Composition: Purpose, Process, and Practice

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Dana R. Ferris and John S. Hedgcock (2014)

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INTRODUCTION

Teaching L2 Composition: Purposes, Process, and Practice (2014) is a scholarly trade book that delivers more than academic prose on the scholarship of teaching English language to speakers of other languages. There is a history and logic beyond the theoretical rubric to learning language composition.

Exactly what the origins and designs looked like in the past, how they look today, and where they may end up in the future is something very interesting. Similar to our universe, it should be an evolutionary process, but one that deserves a passion and depth for learning language with important research relevant to the rationale and methods that follow.

Teaching L2 Composition: Purposes, Process, and Practice (2014) is divided into nine chapters. Each chapter is divided into subsections and ends with a chapter summary, where to look for further learning, and sample activities. The book begins by introducing future TESOL teachers to concepts of writing in a second language (L2).

REVIEW

Chapter 1 introduces us to a history of the application and theories of writing by describing various ancient methods and scripts. Borrowing a quote from Powell (2012, p.11) we are reminded that “[w]riting is the most important technology in the history of the human species” (as cited in Ferris & Hedgcock, 2014, p. 2). From this line we are guided into a well-organized and well-researched array of the origins and theories behind written composition. The authors also include diagrams, charts and visual examples which make conceptualization a friendly experience.

This is a valuable text for educators who are eager to learn practical approaches to the teaching of L2 composition; employing effective teaching composition pedagogies to L2 writers. It helps readers to have the right path/method as writing educators to L2 writers, strongly supported by research and studies. Furthermore, readers are able to expand explicit knowledge. There are many publications related to the L2 writing –not easy even for researchers to keep updating. This third book edition

presents current theories and pedagogies to reader, which they can simply integrate into a classroom setting; readers are able to expand their L2 composition knowledge.

Chapter 2 moves to debunk what we consider ESL writers to be. Chapter 2 provides four different categories of L2 writers as well as their different literacy abilities. These four subgroups of L2 writers are international students, ESL students, resident immigrant students, and generation 1.5 students. It also shows that the various contexts in which L2 writers are taught and challenges for writing instruction. Ferris & Hedgcock emphasized that both L1 and L2 composition can be achieved through disciplinary awareness, which, requires knowledge of literary genre, text comprehension, and production skills (2014).

In Chapter 3 and 4, the history of various approaches to teaching L1 and L2 writing is clarified. The authors agree with Silva's suggestion that we approach L2 writing as "purposeful and contextualized communicative interaction, which involves both the construction and transmission of knowledge." (p. 18). Chapters 3 and 4 offer L2 composition instruction which integrates reading and writing and also explains the connection between them. In addition, it describes genre analysis and its practical implications. It also examines the benefits and drawbacks of relying on a textbook and provides detailed assignment ideas.

Chapter 5 is one of the most important chapters. In chapter 5, the authors talk about course design and implementation constitute for L2 writing. What is covered is how important it is to understand the background, needs and expectations of students in order to formulate efficient objectives. This chapter

is important for L2 teachers, because it helps them to manage and organize course outline and course syllabi with consideration of students' expectations.

Chapter 6 explores the merits and challenges of peer response for L2 learners. This chapter basically discusses strategy guides for using peer review as a tool to help students improve their L2 writing. There are beneficial suggestions about how to make peer response an essential part of improving the writing process in the classroom.

Chapter 7 discusses the attitudes towards error treatment in L2 composition classrooms. Ferris & Hedgcock address error feedback, issues, questions, and options (2014). Eight core questions have been addressed in this chapter: "Does error feedback help students at all? What is an error? What kinds of errors do ESL writers most typically make? Should error feedback be selective or comprehensive? Should error feedback focus on larger or smaller categories or types? Should feedback be direct or indirect? Should errors be labeled or located? Where in the text should error feedback be given?" (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2014, p.263).

Chapter 8 presents a very debatable and controversial topic that researchers and scholars have argued for a long time. It addresses different kinds of errors that L2 student writers frequently make and provides ways to mark students' errors. Discussed is whether student error should be marked and dealt with or not. This chapter is very important because it enlightens teachers with a critical and sensitive issue, which is marking student errors. It helps L2 teachers to decide and discover the best approach of giving feedback and marking student errors in a sufficient, accurate and proficient way. Since the

process of developing L2 writing is a complex and long process, the writers provide different approaches, score guides and suggestions for writing assessment.

Chapter 9 reviews the impact of integrating technology into L2 composition classrooms. The writers discuss the implications of designing computer-generated pedagogical feedback and instructions on students' writing (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2014).

Conclusion

Teaching L2 Composition: Purposes, Process, and Practice is a practical book in helping develop teachers' understanding of the environment of L2 composition classes and consider classroom assessments of L2 writing.

This book would be very useful in future TESOL courses due to several reasons. First, it will help teachers to design tasks and courses that meet students' expectations and needs based on their populations. Second, it provides varied scoring methods of L2 writing to help in marking up student papers. Also, it will raise teachers' awareness toward what teacher feedback should be focused on and how to construct effective commentary.

I would rate this book 5 out 5. It is a well-organized book and I would recommend it to educators who engage in L2 composition teaching and those who would like to expand their L2 composition knowledge.