

CHAPTER TWO

A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF SECOND LANGUAGE WRITING INSTRUCTION FOR SKILLED WRITERS USING L2

My aim in the present chapter is to review the literature relative to writing process and second language writing research and theory. In doing so, I will argue that there is much to be done in the area of writing instruction for skilled writers using L2. I will begin by reporting on a number of issues which are central to the present debate on writing. the influence of which upon second language pedagogies I will then discuss. I will conclude the chapter by proposing a second language writing pedagogy for skilled writers using L2 which attempts to address their specific writing needs.

2.1 Writing process research

Recent literature in the area of writing has given a great deal of emphasis to the process of writing whereas not very long ago the major emphasis was placed on product. As Arndt (1987:257) put it,

"...the very fact that the term 'writing' can refer to both finished products and the processes underlying their production mirrors rather neatly the choice of focus available ..."

A fairly loose and non-controversial definition of writing process could be said to be whatever is entailed by the complex activities out of which a written text emerges. What such activities amount to, their relative importance, the extent to which they are distinct from one another and the degree to which they interact are indeed matters of great relevance to our understanding of writing. For the present, however, I should merely like to draw attention to how interest in writing-as-process emerged in the first place.

Historically speaking, one might say that a change of paradigm has occurred. Up until fairly recently, very little was known about the process of composing; the Romantic belief prevalent in the early twentieth century - and I refer the reader to Bizzel (1986) for a concise review of that - justified the popular idea that good writers were born good writers. Accordingly, evidence as to whether or not writers were among the Elect lay exclusively in the product of their writing. What efficient writers did as they composed was not even acknowledged insofar as the texts they produced were simply regarded as functions of inborn aptitudes elusive to the observant eye.

If one happened not to be a "born writer", it was commonly assumed that the only way to live up to the expectations of schooling and certain demands of literate societies was to attempt to produce texts which contained similar characteristics to those exhibited in the texts produced by the Elect. Hence considerable importance was attached to the style and rhetorical organization of such texts, and the general idea conveyed to student writers in the educational milieu was that writing was a matter of producing finished products similar to such canonical models. Little was said about creativity and the roads which led to the production of exemplary pieces of written discourse.

Gradually, however, dissatisfaction with the quality of the writing-as-product of a generation of student writers trained in this way (Bizzel 1986) undermined the faith on such product-oriented approach to writing instruction. As a result of this, in the early seventies attention began to shift to the need to understand what went on in the writer's mind prior to the conception of a finished text, i.e., the writing process.

In the United Kingdom, the turning point is perhaps best represented in the work of James Britton et al. (1975), while in America it was Janet Emig (1971) who first attempted to understand composing processes. While the British team carried out a cross-sectional study of essays

written by schoolchildren between the age of 11 and 18, Emig conducted a longitudinal case-study of an American twelfth grader; the analyses made them aware that success in composing could vary with the kind of writing students were required to produce. Both agreed that the genre scheme students had most difficulty in coping with was formal expository prose, yet the question that remained unanswered was what could actually be happening in the writer's mind while he was composing.

The doubt encouraged researchers to attempt for the first time to scan the minutiae involved during the actual process of writing. The methods generally used in this type of research consist of detailed case-studies, interviews, surveys and protocol analyses (Zamel 1987). Typical investigations of writing process involve the analysis of:

1. The amount of time writers spend thinking about what they are going to write before putting pen on paper (Stallard 1974; Emig 1975; Pianko 1979; Flower 1980; Wall and Petrovsky 1981).
2. The degree to which writers modify their original rhetorical goals once they start writing (Rose 1980; Sommers 1980; Flower 1980).

3. The extent to which writers reread their own texts as they write (Stallard 1974; Pianko 1979; Birdwell 1980; Wall and Petrovsky 1981).

4. The amount and quality of changes writers make to their texts as they draft and redraft (Perl 1979; Sommers 1980; Flower 1980; Faigley and Witte 1981; Wall and Petrovsky 1981).

5. How writers organize their planning, writing, reading and revising activities (Perl 1980; Sommers 1981).

The findings this type of research generated soon proved to be very promising. Aspects of writing which had not been thought about before began to be recognized and, as the above references imply, one discovery led to the next in a succession of very rapid advances in the area. The most baffling trend these studies seemed to indicate was that on the whole skilled and unskilled writers behaved differently during the process of composing¹.

Strictly speaking, the process of composing is far too complex for it to be possible to think of the differences between what skilled and unskilled writers do as they write in discrete terms. However, it is nevertheless possible to group such differences together into five major categories.

The categories I shall refer to next were derived from the specific research questions that oriented the five types of studies listed above.

The first category concerns the amount of time the writer spends thinking about what he is going to write before actually writing. This phase is known as planning or prewriting. It may involve the elaboration of a written outline which specifies the writer's rhetorical goals, it may consist of a mental representation of what the writer plans to translate into written words, or it may even be ignored by the writer who simply begins to write by writing. What actually happens during this phase may vary both among individual writers and according to different writing tasks. The general tendency, however, is that when a writing task is for some reason or other demanding, skilled writers dedicate a greater amount of time to this planning stage than unskilled writers.

The second major difference between what skilled and unskilled writers do as they write concerns how writers react to their original outlines or prewriting intentions once they begin drafting their texts. A writer may allow his initial plan to guide his entire text or he may feel the need to modify such a plan to a greater or lesser extent as the text emerges. It was found that skilled writers appear to be less committed to their plans in the sense that they are generally able to change or abandon

their initial specifications in favour of revised plans as they go along shaping their ideas into written words. Less experienced writers, on the other hand, tend to be controlled rather than control their prewriting intentions. More often than not, they are overwhelmed and, indeed, practically imprisoned by the ways in which they have defined their rhetorical goals prior to actually translating them into a final draft.

The third difference is relevant to the extent writers read and reread their texts during the activity of writing. Again, there is a considerable amount of variability in this respect which is closely related to the particular type of writing required. Britton (1975) reported that members of his research team were given the task of writing first a letter, then a story and then a research report without being allowed to reread what they wrote as they produced the texts. He found out that whereas this constraint posed no real problems for his admittedly skilled writers when tackling the letter task, it became increasingly more difficult for them to write the story and the research report without being able to refer back to their texts as they wrote. If, however, the genre variable is held constant, as it was in the studies cited above, it appears that expert writers are generally more inclined than unskilled writers to consult their emerging texts.

A fourth way in which the writing-as-activity of skilled and unskilled writers differs is with respect to the amount and quality of changes they make to their texts as they draft and redraft. The studies mentioned hold evidence to the fact that experienced writers tend to modify their initial drafts both more readily and more radically than inexperienced writers. In these studies, the latter gave signs of being prematurely satisfied with their written products or admitted being unable to express themselves in better ways. Expert writers, on the other hand, were not only more critical about their own texts but also tended to perceive themselves as capable of perfecting their initial drafts. As to the quality of the changes made, it was generally acknowledged that while unskilled writers timidly limited themselves to correcting spelling, altering isolated words or rephrasing sentences, skilled writers were prepared to shift paragraphs around, insert new ones and boldly cross out entire sections of their initial drafts if they were not satisfied with them.

Lastly, skilled and unskilled writers apparently also differ with regard to the ways in which they organize their planning, writing, reading and revising. It was found that while many inexperienced writers were simply unaware of such subprocesses of writing, others thought that they must first plan, then write, then read what they had written and

finally check whether there were any inaccuracies in their texts. Unlike them, skilled writers tended to organize these subprocesses of writing recursively in such a way that any given subprocess could be embedded within any other. For example, while inexperienced writers tended to plan their texts only before writing, if they planned at all, skilled writers were inclined to do so throughout the activity, whenever they came across cues that prompted them to reassess their initial prewriting intentions.

In summary, the above analyses lend support to the idea that the writing-as-activity or writing process of skilled and unskilled writers does indeed differ quite substantially in many aspects. Having said this, however, it is worth adding that in these studies fairly demanding essay-type tasks were generally utilized as elicitation procedures. Had more straightforward writing assignments been used instead, it is possible that the differences between what skilled and unskilled writers did as they wrote would have been more subtle. As Applebee (1986:102) put it,

"...different tasks pose different problems and require in turn somewhat different writing processes. Some tasks require much planning and organizing before the writer can begin; some require careful editing before being shared with a critical audience; some involve sharing familiar experiences within well-learned formats and require no further process supports at all."

Thus to be rigorous, one can only go so far as to say that skilled and unskilled writers tend to behave differently during the activity of writing if juggling with the constraints of complex writing assignments. In spite of this limitation, nowadays it is generally agreed that knowledge of such differences may bring new light to composition instruction, particularly when it comes to helping student writers cope with genre schemes that are unfamiliar and cognitively demanding.

Instructional approaches which have emerged from writing process research are especially concerned with a pedagogy that emphasizes the development among student writers of writing subprocesses similar to those of skilled writers. Although there does not seem to be a single authoritative conception of how student writers can be trained to behave like skilled writers during the activity of writing, the various instructional approaches which purport to achieve such an end commonly come under the cover name of The Process Approach. They generally involve exercises that encourage student writers to define their own rhetorical goals, to reassess such goals during the course of their development in writing, to worry about meaning before paying attention to form, and to tailor their writing to the taste of different audiences. Classroom activities typically associated with these exercises include learner-initiated assignments, assignments geared to audiences

other than the teacher, brainstorming sessions, multiple-drafting, and teacher feedback which focuses on meaning rather than form (Applebee 1986).

The aim of process-oriented exercises is to spell out the complex processes out of which a written text emerges so as to guide student writers along the paths which lead to the production of meaningful and rhetorically well-organized texts. By encouraging student writers to explore meaning through writing and by providing them with overt feedback on how readers would interpret the ways in which their meanings have been encoded, it is expected that they will learn to define and control their rhetorical goals, and rewrite their initial drafts until their meanings can be understood in the manner they desire.

Indeed, this new pedagogical direction is intuitively very appealing, particularly since it is now recognized that product-imitation approaches to writing instruction fail to address aspects of writing which transcend the domain of form and correctness in a suitable way (Bizzel 1986). However, recent surveys of what actually happens in the writing classroom seem to indicate that the impact of process research is still very limited (Applebee 1986; Zamel 1987). Of course at this early stage of implementation of The Process Approach, one does not as yet know whether training student writers to adopt writing strategies commonly employed by experienced writers will in

effect improve the content, the rhetorical organization and the consequent readability of their written products. It is certainly a matter which demands careful verification; after all, one cannot assume, as many unquestioning supporters of The Process Approach seem to have done, that all who sing will become blackbirds simply because all blackbirds sing.

The above is obviously only a brief account of how writing process came to be a major concern of research in writing. At this juncture perhaps I should make it clear that I have deliberately overlooked lower-level aspects of writing in order to better focus on writing process. My reason for doing this is not that I find orthographic and strictly linguistic aspects of writing unimportant, which I do not, but because writing process and its assumed connection with higher level, discoursal aspects of writing represent the point of departure of the argument I wish to pursue.

I shall argue that L2 writing pedagogies risk being overly influenced by instructional approaches that have emerged from process research, and that this might distract one from discoursal problems of singular importance to L2 writers. Before I proceed to do so, however, I shall review the most generalizable findings of recent research into the somewhat more specialized field of L2 writing process.

2.2 Writing process and second language writing

When concern with writing process was emerging in the early seventies, writing was regarded as the least important of the four language skills in the foreign or second language classroom. In the words of Rivers (1967:241), it should be considered

"...the handmaid of other language skills and not take precedence as the major skill to be developed."

It does not make a difference if this was because there were still traces of audiolingual methodology in second language instruction or if it was because early second language acquisition studies advocated that, as in first language acquisition, speaking should come before writing. Because of this relatively secondary rôle attributed to writing, while gigantic steps were being taken in other dimensions of second language instruction, the traditional methods of teaching L2 writing somehow escaped being seriously attacked. Thus dictation, translation, imitative composition and grammar-oriented exercises of sentence completion, expansion and transformation long outlived the equally traditional modes of teaching spoken language.

Eventually, however, it was realized that for many L2 learners the comprehension and production of written discourse could in fact be more vital than the development of second language oral skills (Hatch 1984). It was in this

context that the traditional L2 reading pedagogies and later the equally traditional L2 writing pedagogies became objects of critical scrutiny.

At the beginning of the last decade, L2 composition scholar Vivian Zamel (1980) was one of the pioneers of the idea that L2 writing exercises which focused on grammar affected only a relatively minor component of the complex compositional process. A couple of years later she expanded this thought in claiming that

"Methods that emphasize form and correctness ignore how ideas get explored through writing and fail to teach students that writing is essentially a process of discovering meaning." (Zamel 1982:195).

Much in the same line, Watson (1982) affirmed that imitative composition, a common practice in the traditional L2 writing classroom, was an exercise that could inhibit the development of the L2 writer's ideas. Watson then added that imitative composition based on less stultifying, albeit non-authentic, didactic model passages could lead to false reassurance on the part of the learner. Similarly, Raimes (1983) criticized the undue emphasis given to form and correctness on the grounds that it tended to indulge learners in disregarding content and gave them the illusion of learning how to write in the L2 when they were only learning how to avoid errors and produce grammatically correct, but otherwise flat and uninteresting texts. Taking criticism a step further, Robb et al. (1986) conducted a

study in which they analysed the effects of traditional corrective feedback upon L2 writers' composing ability. Based on their findings, they concluded that such feedback did not directly improve the overall quality of L2 writers' texts.

Obviously, however, merely criticizing the traditional methods used in the L2 classroom and proving that they were insufficient would not bring about much innovation. There was a much felt need to address the problems which transcended the domain of form and correctness in the texts by L2 writers.

Aware of the newly born aura of excitement about writing process, Zamel (1976) called her colleagues' attention to the fact that L2 writing teachers could have a lot to learn from the type of research being carried out in L1 writing process, especially with regard to the attempts to find out what writing-as-activity was, what it involved and what differentiated the skilled from the unskilled writer. Her intentions were commendable, for L2 researchers began to acknowledge writing process and hence their studies no longer focused exclusively on writing-as-product. In this context, writing process research methods were imported to the field of L2 writing and, allowing for some generalizations, it was found that the composing processes of L2 writers were very similar indeed to those of native writers.

Zamel (1983) herself conducted a case-study in which she analysed the writing-as-activity of six advanced ESL writers. She reported that although they seemed to be aware of the recursive potential of the subprocesses of writing, her skilled writers - those who did not find the activity of writing "in and of itself problematic" - manifested this understanding more effectively. Likewise, Raimes (1987:459) found that

"... [L2 writers] with greater demonstrated writing ability revised and edited more than those at lower levels. Those with confidence in their L1 writing ability revised and edited the most."

In an earlier study, Raimes (1985) analysed what unskilled L2 writers did as they wrote and came to the conclusion that their overall behaviour was very similar to that of unskilled native writers. Recently, Arndt (1987) devised a rather well-devised comparative study in which she in a sense replicated the findings of both Zamel and Raimes. What she did was to analyse what Chinese learners of English did as they wrote first in Chinese and then in English, only to discover that their writing behaviour remained fairly constant, irrespective of the language in which they wrote.

Anticipating such similarities, Zamel (1982:203) hypothesized that

"...approaches to the teaching of composition ESL teachers may have felt only appropriate for native speakers [...] may be effective for teaching all levels of writing, including ESL composition."

Interpreting this in a way that seemed to emphasize spontaneous acquisition as opposed to non-spontaneous learning, and hence fit in his theory of second language acquisition rather neatly, Krashen (1984:38) claimed that

"...significant similarities in pedagogical applications are called for."

And Raimes (1987:460) too affirmed that

"... the similarities noted between the writing process of ESL student writers and native-speaker students suggest that many of the teaching techniques recommended for L1 students are appropriate for L2 learners as well."

Responsive to such findings and claims, the more innovative L2 writing teachers and course-book writers began to envisage The Process Approach as a promising addition or alternative to the outmoded traditional exercises in L2 composition. In contrast to the widespread attention the similarities in L1 and L2 writing processes have received, to my knowledge the only difference that has been adequately documented in the writing process literature is that L2 writers do not appear so inhibited as L1 writers by their own mistakes and attempts to correct them (Raimes 1987).

2.3 Do the similarities between L1 and L2 writing processes conceal important differences?

I have already pointed out that, under the influence of first language writing studies, attention has shifted from writing product to writing process in recent second language writing research. I have also mentioned that this research has disclosed more similarities than differences in the writing processes of L1 and L2 writers, and that it has drawn particular attention to what the writing processes of skilled and unskilled L1 and L2 writers have in common (Zamel 1983, Raimes 1985 and 1987, and Arndt 1987). I then reported that as a result of such findings, similar instructional approaches for the two have been proposed (Zamel 1982, Krashen 1984 and Raimes 1987). In this section I shall present some evidence in support of the possibility that the similarities between the writing processes of L1 and L2 writers can conceal many differences, including differences in writing process. Based on such evidence, I shall proceed to build the conceptual framework upon which the present research is founded. The discussion will give special emphasis to the following three claims:

1. The importance attached to the shift from product to process has been exaggerated.
2. The call for similar pedagogical approaches for L1 and L2 writers is hypothetically premature.

3. Skilled writers using L2 are the ones who benefit the least from process-oriented second language writing pedagogies.

To begin with, I would like to remind the reader that it is yet too early to tell for sure whether emphasis on writing process or writing-as-activity is indeed an effective way of improving the readability of the writing-as-product of native writers. The ways in which skilled writers behave during the activity of writing does not automatically mean that unskilled writers need be trained to behave in the same way in order for their writing products to improve. This cause and consequence relationship should be empirically tested before any claims pertaining to it are made. The assumption that emphasis on writing-as-process can be an effective way of addressing the L2 writer's discursal problems should therefore also be regarded with care. Before endorsing the theoretical position of Zamel (1982), Krashen (1984) and Raimes (1987) in this respect, and before more and more L2 writing teachers start opting for the rather fashionable process-oriented course-books on writing gradually invading the foreign language market, it seems only reasonable to ask to what extent L2 writing is similar to L1 writing in the first place.

In the very beginning of this chapter, I called attention to the fact that writing was not only an activity but also a product. I would therefore like to address this question from both angles. In doing so, I will argue that the shift

of attention from product to process has distracted one from seeing significant differences between L1 and L2 writers, including differences in writing process. This does not mean I wish to imply that writing process research must have missed out some obvious difference in comparing the writing processes of L1 and L2 writers. On the contrary, I believe the evidence so far collected suggests that there are more immediate similarities than there are differences in the writing processes of the two. That is to say, the planning, writing, rereading and revising activities of skilled writers using L1 are basically the same as those of skilled writers using L2; likewise, unskilled writers experience similar writing process difficulties irrespective of whether they are using L1 or L2. The point I am trying to make is that the major difference between L1 and L2 writers has primarily to do with writing product. While the writing processes of the two may indeed function in the same way, the texts L1 and L2 writers with equivalent writing skills produce tend to differ in quality. The fact that the texts (products) by L2 writers are usually more defective means that they must also have greater problems in discerning which parts of their production are good and which are bad. I will now explain why I believe that these product-related problems can have indirect, albeit very significant, process implications.

The most obvious of the differences between writers using L1 and L2 which does not immediately have to do with writing process is that of linguistic competence. This competence is usually associated with writing product, for its effects are more visible in writing products than in writing processes: the texts by low proficiency L2 writers are normally dotted with simply a lot more errors than those by L1 writers with equivalent writing skills.

It is not, however, just the writing products of writers using L2 that are negatively affected by low second language proficiency. Their writing processes too may suffer indirectly as a consequence of that, for these writers have to overcome lexical and syntactical barriers which simply do not concern their L1 counterparts to the same extent. According to Widdowson (1983), the non-automation of the syntactic rules of a language can have a negative effect upon the writer's ability to deal with its discourse function because his mental resources will be overly preoccupied with achieving linguistic correctness. Similarly, Daiute (1984) asserts that there is psycholinguistic evidence to suggest that the automation of certain aspects of writing such as syntax and access to lexis can drastically reduce the burden upon the writer's short-term memory, and hence allow more space for competing higher-level mental activities that take place during

writing. The higher-level activities that take place in the mind of writers using L1 during the process of writing must therefore be a lot less constrained by lower-level concerns than those of low-proficiency writers using L2.

There is another, if less obvious, product-related difference between L1 and L2 writers which on the surface has little to do with writing process. Since this particular difference is the one which is most relevant to the present study, I will discuss it in much greater depth. To begin with, one should bear in mind that the objective of the writer is to encode his ideas into written words in such a way that the reader is able to interpret them as the author wished. This can be achieved if the writer makes appropriate use of the conventions which writers and readers must agree on if a text is to be fully understood in the manner authors desire (Smith 1982). It is therefore important to understand what these conventions are and to be aware of the extent to which they are language-specific. At the level of lexis and syntax, it is fairly self-evident that writer/reader conventions are for the most part language-specific. What is not so obvious, however, is that language-specific writer/reader conventions can go beyond lexis and syntax.

Kaplan (1972) asserted that rhetoric, coherence, unity and style are arbitrary but rule governed in any given language in the same way as phonological, morphological and

syntactic choices. He illustrated what he meant by showing how the relatively linear fashion in which ideas are held together in written English discourse clashes with the inherent circularity of the written discourse of Oriental languages and the tendency towards digressiveness of that of Romance languages. Kaplan (1983:140-141) pointed out that

"...speakers of different languages use different devices to present information, to establish relationships among ideas, to show the centrality of one idea as opposed to another, to select the most effective means of presentation."

Kaplan also used this argument to support his Sapir-Whorfian claim that logic, the basis of what holds ideas together in texts, evolves out of culture. According to Smith (1982), these writer/reader conventions may indeed vary from culture to culture. However, Smith did not go so far as to affirm that logic is culturally bound; instead, and perhaps more perceptively, he claimed that the discourse conventions of languages need not necessarily be directly related to pure logic. Needless to say, this highly philosophical divergence does not really concern the point I am trying to make. For the matter, I shall assume that logic can be viewed in terms of a surface and a deep structure. Within this framework, the surface logic underlying the implicit rules of the discourse conventions of languages can differ irrespective of whether the deep structure of pre-verbal logic is universal or culturally bound.

I must admit, however, that the above assumption contradicts the idea that Western languages possess a common denominator which can be traced back to Aristotelian rhetoric. Indeed, as Regent (1985) put it, this may be true insofar as simplified didactic discourse is concerned. On the other hand, Regent added that his analysis of French and English scientific discourse revealed that many discursal features of the genre are to a large extent language-specific. To illustrate this, a simplified version of the differences between the French and English scientific discourse conventions highlighted by Regent is supplied in table 2.1.

DISCOURSE CONVENTIONS	FRENCH	ENGLISH
ICONIC CHARACTERISTICS OF TEXT	text is more fragmented; abundance of typographical markers	text is more compact; few typographical markers
DISCURSIVE SEQUENCES	many paragraphs and propositions are merely juxtaposed	most paragraphs and propositions are explicitly connected
ILLOCUTION	discussion tends to be left open-ended	stronger final assertions
GENERAL FOCUS	on facts	on reasoning

Table 2.1: differences between French and English scientific discourse, as noted by Regent (1985).

Much in the same line, Clyne (1984) conducted a comparative study of academic texts by English and German-speaking scholars. A schematic representation of the study's findings is supplied in table 2.2 below.

DISCOURSE CONVENTIONS	ENGLISH-SPEAKING AUTHORS	GERMAN-SPEAKING AUTHORS
Linearity of text	64% linear 36% slightly or very digressive	20% linear 80% slightly or very digressive
Symmetry of text	64% symmetrical 36% slightly asymmetrical	20% symmetrical 80% slightly or very asymmetrical
Placing of advance organizers	61% at or near beginning of text 39% later in text	50% at or near beginning of text 50% later in text
Sentence types	47% topic sentences 53% bridging or other non-topic sentences	37% topic sentences 63% bridging or other non-topic sentences
Integration of supplementary data to the main text corpus	64% entirely integrated 36% partly integrated	18% entirely integrated 82% partly or not at all integrated

Table 2.2: discorsal differences in texts by German and English-speaking scholars, after Clyne (1984).

Clyne's analysis gave him reasons to believe that what determines the above differences in discourse is not so much the different structures of languages, but cultural determinants and national attitudes to knowledge. He found out that while in English it is the writer who must ensure that the reader will gain access to a text, in German this

responsibility lies primarily in the hands of the reader. He concluded that whereas in English expository prose clarity is prized, in the German equivalent erudition is what matters most.

There is no point in imposing value judgments in this respect. Clearly, within the framework of Schema theory (Bartlett 1932; Carrel 1983), both clarity and erudition may serve their purpose perfectly well provided the expectations of readers are not violated. The problem lies in that more often than not one is so accustomed to the schemata that govern the discourse conventions of the genres one usually reads in one's own native language (Steffensen 1986) that one is likely to become prejudiced against the schemata that govern the conventions of these same genres in other languages.

This explains why English-speaking scholars, whose expectations conform to a relatively linear structure of discourse, might find articles written by German-speaking authors rather opaque. Conversely, papers by English-speaking authors may appear to be excessively simplistic in the eyes of native German readers. In the words of Clyne, English-speaking scholars tend to find German publications "heavy", "longwinded", "muddled" and "partly irrelevant"; conversely, it seems that their German counterparts generally find articles by English-speaking authors "superficial" and their presentation "laymanlike".

Translations offer yet another example of how the discourse conventions of a particular register in a language may be incompatible with those of an equivalent register in another language. Perhaps the most salient exponent of such an incompatibility is poetry; translators often have to ignore structural equivalences between languages and actually rewrite poems in an entirely different way so that the emotional charge behind them can travel across language-boundaries. It is commonly said that it takes another poet to translate poetry. But even in the case of the least emotional of genres, such as formal expository prose, translators often find themselves obliged to modify certain patterns of the original in order to accommodate them to the language into which they are translating. In her analysis of English translations of a variety of French texts, Guillemin-Flescher (1981:154) pointed out that

"...on constate souvent, en comparant un énoncé français avec sa traduction, que le traducteur anglais a ajouté de points de repère ne figurant pas dans le texte d'origine."

The most noteworthy domains of discourse incompatibility between the French texts and English translations analysed by Guillemin-Flescher are supplied in table 2.3 below.

DISCOURSE CONVENTIONS	FRENCH ORIGINAL	ENGLISH TRANSLATION
Sentence-complexity	X main clauses	simplification of syntax
Use of conjunctions	X conjunctions	conjunctions added to text
Use of punctuation	X punctuation markers	punctuation markers deleted from text
Use of canonical SVO order	X non-SVO clauses	clauses rewritten according to SVO order

Table 2.3: discursual changes commonly introduced in English translations of texts which are in French in the original, adapted from Guillemin-Flescher (1981).

I do not wish, however, to prolong this discussion on cultural differences that come to surface in the discourse of languages per se. Rather, my major concern is whether such differences can affect the writing-as-product of L2 writers. What I shall review next is the evidence as to whether an L2 writer is likely to transfer the discourse conventions he takes for granted in his native language to the texts he produces in L2.

Kaplan (1983) conducted a very interesting experiment involving native and non-native speakers' intuitions about written English discourse. The experimental task consisted of a series of English sentences each of which was followed by three possible alternatives for sentences which could come next in the text. Subjects were asked to decide which one of the three was the most likely, and Kaplan found out

that native and non-native speaker responses were significantly different. He suggested that this could be due to the fact that the latter brought with them alternatives available in their native languages and applied them to English.

Rutherford (1983) also appears to endorse the general idea that discursal aspects of an L2 writer's native language may affect his L2 writing-as-product. Rutherford's analysis of essays written by Mandarin, Japanese and Korean learners of English gave him reasons to believe that discourse phenomena such as topic-prominence and pragmatic word order are transferable entities although they are not always readily visible according to conventional language typologies.

Scarcella (1984) studied how a group of thirty native and eighty non-native writers of English of different L1 backgrounds oriented their readers in expository essays. She found significant discursal differences between the two groups in terms of how frequently they resorted to "attention-engaging and clarifying devices" such as cataphoras, interrogatives, topic sentences and so on. The differences led her to conclude that it was important that discourse and cultural knowledge be taught in the L2 writing classroom. Table 2.4 below provides more details about these differences.

DISCOURSE CONVENTIONS	NON-NATIVE SPEAKERS	NATIVE SPEAKERS
Cataphora	-	+
Interrogatives	-	+
Direct Assertions	-	+
Structural repetition	-	+
Topic sentences	-	+

Table 2.4: discorsal differences of orientations by native and non-native speakers of English, after Scarcella (1984).
 - comparatively restricted (-)/ frequent (+) use -

Similarly, Regent (1985) claims that for the text of a person wishing to write in a foreign language to be fully readable, it has to conform to the foreign rhetorical system; more than a decade earlier, Kaplan (1972:103) had already defended this position in asserting that

"...the ways in which sentences are related to each other in large lumps of language constitute something to be taught, not something to be assumed to exist universally across languages."

In brief, the above findings and claims give some indication that the language-specific conventions which orient the native writer with regard to the efficiency, effectiveness and appropriateness of his written words represent a problem area for L2 writers of different first language backgrounds. In other words, the transfer of L1 conventions to L2 texts may constitute an important difference between the writing products of L1 and L2

writers. In order to determine if such product-related differences might also have indirect process implications, what one must examine next is whether this can be a problem for all L2 writers, irrespective of their skill or strictly linguistic proficiency.

The question of whether L2 writers with a high level of linguistic proficiency in L2 still have difficulties with its discourse conventions was probed by Scarcella (1984). What Scarcella did was to introduce a further variable to her orientation study in observing not only how differently native and non-native speakers oriented their readers, but also whether the orientations by high and low-proficiency non-native speakers could differ as well. Although she found the discourse conventions of the texts by high-proficiency non-native speakers to be indeed more in tune with those of the texts by native speakers, the discrepancies perceived still appeared to be too significant to be ignored. In other words, although it is not surprising that strictly linguistic proficiency more or less correlated with Scarcella's L2 writers' knowledge of L2 discourse conventions, there appears to be an upper limit to such a correlation in the sense that the discourse of highly proficient L2 writers can still be significantly different from that of native writers.

The second question is whether the discursial problems of L2 writers in an advanced stage of second language development have to do with weak writing skills. In her famous study about the composing processes of six advanced ESL students, Zamel (1983) reported that her L2 writers who understood the recursive nature of writing and who did not view L2 writing as something in and of itself problematical still experienced individual difficulties and frustrations in relation to stylistic and lexical choices. Zamel, however, does not seem to have attached any importance to the fact that this could be due to insufficient L2 discourse knowledge.

Arndt (1987:265) attributed greater significance to this question in asserting that regardless of their writing skill her L2 writers

"...felt less able to try out alternatives and less happy with their decisions in L2 than in L1, not only because they had more limited resources to draw on, but also because they felt less secure about the options available in the L2."

This means that even her L2 writers who were skilled in terms of writing-as-activity were apparently unable to discriminate among the discursial options available in English in the ways native English writers would.

Similarly, Raimes (1987) affirmed that even skilled L2 writers who plan, reread and revise their texts do so with few principles to guide them, and in a way described by Raimes as being "haphazard".

To summarize, there is evidence to suggest that equivalent registers of different languages are governed by different discourse conventions, and that cross-linguistic influence is not at all uncommon in the discourse of L2 writers. Further, it also appears that L2 writers who are in an advanced stage of second language proficiency and who are skilled in terms of writing-as-activity also experience difficulties in this respect. What does not seem to have been explored, however, is the possibility that such product-related discursal incompatibilities can indirectly constrain the writing processes of L2 writers.

While writing according to the discourse conventions of any particular genre can be automatic for L1 writers who are familiar with the genre in question (Kogen 1986), L2 writers who are familiar with the discourse conventions of an equivalent genre in their L1 cannot blindly rely on the same conventions when composing in L2. If they do, then it is likely that the ways in which L2 writers organize texts can jeopardize a native reader's understanding of discourse. If, on the other hand, L2 writers try to make use of L2 discourse conventions, because this is not necessarily a matter of writing within well-learned,

automatic formats, writing according to these conventions can represent an additional burden on the mental activities of writers using L2 during the process of writing. Thus the writing processes of L2 writers can be constrained not only by lexical and syntactical product-related difficulties (Widdowson 1983; Daiute 1984), but also by discursal ones.

It therefore seems that in having attached so much importance to the writing process/product dichotomy, process research has paid too little attention not only to the two product-related differences between L1 and L2 writers - strictly linguistic proficiency and knowledge of language-specific discourse conventions - but also to the process implications these differences might have. This brings me to the next point in this discussion, namely, that those who have called for similar instructional approaches for L1 and L2 writers have failed to take into account such differences between the two.

When it comes to assessing the repercussions of second language process research upon second language writing instruction, the emphasis placed on the process/product dichotomy (it does not really seem to be a dichotomy) and the consequent undue emphasis assigned to the similarities in the writing processes of L1 and L2 writers is at the root of the misconceived claim that if The Process Approach works for L1 writers it should also work for L2 writers.

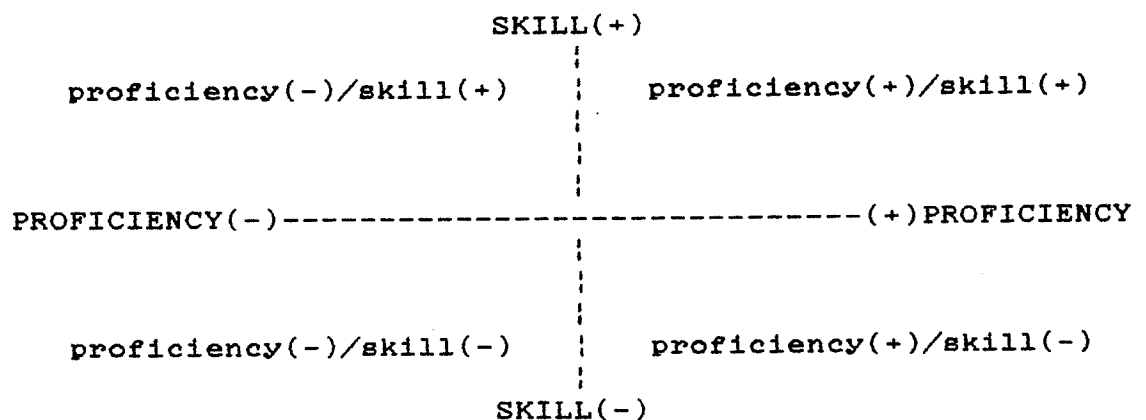
The first flaw in the above reasoning is one of inconsistency. While process research has acknowledged the non-trivial distinction between the writing processes of skilled and unskilled writers in drawing attention to the similarities between writers using L1 and L2, little attention has been paid to the importance this distinction might have in relation to L2 writing instruction. To put it differently, unskilled writers using L2 (UL2 writers), just like unskilled writers using L1 (UL1 writers), may indeed benefit from learning what skilled writers do when they write. To make UL2 writers aware of their audiences, to make them aware that writing is a process of discovering meaning, that it is recursive, that planning is important, that plans should be flexible, that revision should give priority to meaning, and that editing is merely a matter of polishing an already well-planned text, might have a positive effect not only on their L2 writing-as-product, but even their L1 texts may benefit from such type of instruction².

However, in theory this would also mean that skilled writers using L2 (SL2 writers), just like skilled writers using L1 (SL1 writers), should find process instruction redundant. If the writing processes of L1 and L2 writers are indeed so similar, to encourage SL2 writers to define their own rhetorical goals, to reassess these goals during the course of their development in writing, to review and revise meaning before form, and to take different audiences

into account, is to encourage them to do what they most probably already do. The theoretical implication of this rationale is simply that, in the same way as SL1 writers, SL2 writers do not need any writing instruction.

The differences in the writing of L1 and L2 writers referred to earlier in this section suggest that not only UL2 writers but also SL2 writers can benefit from L2 writing instruction. Or rather, if one recognizes that L2 writing is based upon both the axis of L2 proficiency and the axis of writing skill, it should be obvious that L2 writing instruction should distinguish between at least the four extreme combinations along them, as shown in figure 2.1 below.

Figure 2.1: The four extreme combinations along the axes of second language writing



The inconsistency factor of process-oriented L2 writing instruction therefore lies in a failure to take into account the differences in writing skill highlighted by

process research. The consequent deficiency of process-oriented L2 writing instruction is then the neglect of the positive half of the axis of skill. In other words, no distinction with regard to instruction is made between SL2 writers and UL2 writers, both of whom tend to be treated as if they were unskilled³.

It would be naive, however, to assume that The Process Approach focuses on writing skills for their own sake; in fact, most of the supporters of The Process Approach see it ultimately as a means of addressing writing-as-product beyond the domain of form and correctness. In other words, The Process Approach is believed to be a way in which L2 writers in general can be helped to go beyond the production of grammatically accurate texts, and actually explore meaning and the different ways meanings can be realized in the target language.

It is possible to support this position on the grounds that by learning writing-as-activity strategies or skills from the perspective of the target language, L2 writers can become unconsciously familiar with the language-specific conventions of L2 discourse. As L2 writers draft and redraft in the process classroom, their teacher will supply overt feedback on how native readers would decode their texts; eventually, this could enable L2 writers to modify their writing-as-product in a manner which would conform to native readers' expectations.

However, I would like to remind the reader that The Process Approach in the L2 writing classroom is very much based on the conception of The Process Approach in L1 writing pedagogies. Having said this, I believe that to neglect the differences between L1 writers (for whom process instruction was originally conceived) and L2 writers in general can be an extremely costly way of teaching the latter what the expectations of native readers are. The time native writers have to acquire a special sensitivity towards the discourse conventions of their own language is almost limitless if compared with the time most L2 writers normally have to learn how to write in a foreign language. What could work in terms of L1 writing instruction may not be satisfactory in terms of L2 writing instruction; if one remembers that L2 writing courses are usually relatively short, there is simply no time to simulate spontaneous acquisition over real time in the L2 classroom context.

Not only have native writers the chance to familiarize themselves with the sociocultural expectations of their readers throughout their schoolyears, and even throughout their lives, but they also have the additional advantage of a far more signposted exposure to the discourse conventions in question given that they are native readers themselves, and that they are not handicapped by the often competing conventions of another language. Moreover, it seems rather absurd to overlook the fact that SL2 writers are likely to have already developed a somewhat similar sensitivity with

regard to the discourse of their native languages which, in turn, could be used precisely as a short-cut towards the acquisition of the language-specific decision-making protocol of the native writer. According to Edelsky (1982), the knowledge about writing L2 writers already possess in L1 is applied to L2 writing. Similarly, for Raimes (1987:441),

"...when writing strategies are acquired in L1, the strategies are transferred to L2."

To treat SL2 writers as if they were unskilled writers and as if they were ignorant of a general understanding of discourse is therefore to neglect what are probably their most precious tools.

Another flaw with respect to The Process Approach is that many of its supporters seem to have interpreted the axis of proficiency too narrowly. After all, as far as writing is concerned, proficiency is not limited to strictly linguistic proficiency; it also, and very significantly, includes knowledge of L2 discourse conventions. Figure 2.2 below draws attention to this fact.

One should therefore not be unaware of the possibility of some undesirable side-effects that might arise in the L2 writing process classroom due to the fact that both teachers and learners may fail to decentre⁷ from the sociocultural expectations that pervade the ways meanings are conveyed through the discourse of their respective native languages. A native L2 writing teacher may all too easily fail to see that what is, say, incoherent in her students' texts might be coherent and appropriate according to the discourse conventions that govern their L1. He may therefore interpret this as a sign of lack of understanding of the notion of coherence rather than as a sign of insufficient knowledge of L2 discourse and even, unknowingly, adopt a patronizing attitude towards his students as a consequence of this.

When Raimes (1987) described the revision of her skilled L2 writers as being "haphazard", it seems that she did not consider that what was apparently "haphazard" to her could in fact be systematic to her writers. Not knowing that what these students might need most in order for their revision in L2 to be felicitous is to become aware of L2 discourse conventions, Raimes (1987:460) proceeded to suggest that

"Course design thus should include instruction and practice with strategies: [how] to generate ideas, plan, rehearse, write, rescan, revise, edit."

The above suggestion is a clear example of how lack of discourse knowledge can be mistaken for lack of writing skill, and in this way end up promoting extremely patronizing attitudes on the part of L2 writing teachers. Conversely, SL2 writers too may fail to decentre from the sociocultural expectations that pervade the discourse of their native languages. I have often heard EAP teachers complain that that their judgment about the language used in specialist essays is sometimes declined on the grounds that they do not understand enough about the jargon of certain disciplines. Such unsparing remarks must surely come from SL2 writers who are very confident about their abilities as writers, but who nevertheless ignore that the L2 might operate under the auspices of different discourse conventions. After all, even if the trade-off between the L2 writer's knowledge of subject and the EAP teacher's knowledge of language is not always straightforward (James 1984), the experienced EAP teacher does not have to be extremely knowledgeable of the specialist's jargon in order to be able to tell whether or not the essence of a text is readable. Alternatively, SL2 writers who accept the teacher's comments may nevertheless find overt feedback of the kind "this sounds repetitive" or "this is unclear" very obscure if they normally express themselves successfully in their native languages by means of the same inherent discursal logic. To ask SL2 writers to rewrite their initial drafts in the light of feedback based on the misleading assumption that discourse conventions - which

govern what could sound repetitive or unclear - are universal, may undermine their confidence as writers and hence disrupt the flow of their written words.

In spite of these potential drawbacks, however, I do not want to give the impression that feedback in the process classroom has an essentially negative effect upon the SL2 writer. There is, in fact, some evidence that by providing L2 writers with overt feedback on how native readers would decode and react to their texts, the readability of their final drafts can improve in relation to that of their initial drafts (Raimes 1983). The two problems I wish to raise are therefore of a different order.

Firstly, in the EFL context at least, one must recognize that many L2 teachers are not native speakers themselves, thus it is doubtful whether they are able to provide learners with overt feedback on how native readers would react to their texts. Also, one should note that the non-native L2 teacher too may experience negative transfer with regard to the discourse conventions of his native language, and hence fail to perceive which aspects of it might clash with the conventions of the L2.

Secondly, and most importantly, the type of feedback given in the L2 writing process classroom may result in an excessive and unnecessary dependence upon teacher feedback. Although there is evidence that such feedback has a

positive effect on L2 writers' final drafts in comparison with their initial drafts, there is little to indicate that the same improvement will occur in the absence of teacher feedback after the instructional period is over. In other words, to my knowledge there are not as yet any studies which have investigated whether L2 writers are able to improve their successive drafts on their own after having attended a process-centred L2 writing course. It is imperative to recognize, as Widdowson (1980:238-239) put it, that the writer has to

"...convey his propositions **without** the benefit of overt interaction which enables conversationalists to negotiate meanings by direct confrontation." (my stress)

Similarly, Luria (1982:164) points out that

"...the writer does not witness any immediate responses to his/her communication and has no external stimuli that can serve to modify his/her mistakes."

If this is so, then the sooner the L2 writer is able to stand on his own, the better. Teacher feedback, after all, ceases as soon as the usually short instructional period ends. The feedback I think the L2 writer needs most is therefore precisely that which will enable him to rely less and less on cues from his writing teacher. It is of crucial importance that learners avoid becoming addicted to teacher feedback. According to De Beaugrande (1980:286),

"Learners who acquire workable standards for evaluating their own prose as a protocol of decision-making need not rely constantly on the teacher's feedback."

I do not believe the kind of feedback given by the L2 process teacher enables L2 writers to acquire such standards in an efficient way. Although it can help writers improve their successive drafts, it is doubtful whether it enables L2 writers to generalize rules that will promote their independence from such feedback after a short period of instruction. On the other hand, explicit information on the parameters which orient the native writer's decisions with regard to the use of language-specific discourse conventions could play a fundamental part in L2 writing instruction, particularly if the learners in question are SL2 writers who can handle writing-as-activity self-sufficiently.

But I must stress that I am not altogether rejecting The Process Approach in the L2 composition classroom; I simply do not think one should assume that it is as relevant to the SL2 writer as it can be to the UL2 writer or the UL1 writer. Moreover, it is also true that process-oriented L2 pedagogies can deal with the problems of L2 writers in general in a way which represents a considerable improvement on what product-oriented pedagogies are able to offer. Indeed, the problems regarding pedagogies which give special emphasis to written products are well known and fairly uncontroversial (Bizzel 1986, Zamel 1982, Watson

1982, Raimes 1983, Robb et al. 1986). In addition to not having taken into account the axis of skill, product-oriented approaches too have addressed only a narrow aspect of the axis of proficiency. A backwards shift from process to product has nevertheless been proposed. Arndt (1987:265) goes so far as to assert that

"Whilst those L2 writers with inadequate composing skills would certainly benefit from the incorporation of a "process-centred" approach into EFL writing pedagogy [...] all L2 writers, proficient or otherwise in terms of writing-as-activity, need more help with the demands of writing-as-text."

Although to a certain extent the above might be true, perhaps it is too strong a claim. Contrary to Arndt's view, what I suppose is needed is not so much yet another change of paradigm which states that The Process Approach in the L2 classroom is not as important as one would have thought, but more careful consideration as to when it is required and how indiscriminately it is adopted. Similarly, Hamp-Lyons (1987:34) has pondered that

"What is needed [...] is research rather than polemic and hypotheses: without the results of such research are [sic] available, the process approach is as vulnerable to assault as the product approach has been."

Because writing skills can affect writing products and linguistic and discoursal proficiency can constrain writing processes, what seems to be required is further research at the crossroads of process and product. The most

While process-oriented pedagogies have given too much attention to teaching these writers skills they already possess, product-oriented pedagogies have promoted little more than standards of lexical and syntactic correctness these writers are already aware of. It would be interesting to see how much Clyne's (1984) German-speaking scholars who were proficient in English would learn from EAP writing pedagogies which "taught" them how to plan, write, reread and revise their texts by paying attention to meaning; it would be equally interesting to see how much these scholars would learn from pedagogies which encouraged them to write in a flat and uninteresting way, or worse, only prized the standards of lexical and syntactic correctness of their texts while at the same time allowing them to be "opaque, longwinded and partly irrelevant".

As already implied earlier in this section, what these writers seem to need most is to become aware of the discourse conventions of the genres they wish to master in L2, and then to be able to use them in a way which does not have the washback side-effect of overburdening their minds during the activity of writing. This is precisely the question that will be discussed in the next section.

2.4 Writing instruction for skilled writers using L2

In this section a second language writing pedagogy for SL2 writers which is based on both process and product will be proposed. In terms of product, the focus will not be on standards of correctness, but on L2 discourse conventions. In terms of process, the focus will not be on the development of writing skills (i.e., planning, writing, rereading and revising), but on drawing on the existing skills of SL2 writers. The pedagogical goals of the instructional approach proposed are to help SL2 writers produce more readable texts in L2, and to help them become more independent from feedback.

In order for these goals to be achieved, both SL2 writers and their writing teachers must first of all decentre from the discourse conventions of their native languages by accepting that such conventions are not universal across cultures. In this way it is possible for SL2 writers to understand the comments from their writing teachers more readily, and for writing teachers to point out not only what exactly it is that needs rewriting in L2 texts, but also how such texts can be rewritten according to L2 discourse conventions. In other words, for the dialogue between SL2 writers and their writing teachers to make sense for both, the two need to decentre from the schemata that pervade the discourse conventions of their respective first languages.

One way this could be brought about is by helping SL2 writers familiarize themselves with the discourse conventions of the target language through reading. More specifically, if their aim is to learn how to produce the language of, say, English scientific papers, SL2 writers should read scientific papers in English in order to realize that the discourse conventions of the genre may be different from the ways they normally organize their L1 scientific papers. By reading model passages and paying attention to how such texts have been written, and comparing this with how they themselves would have written similar texts, SL2 writers can extract a measure of what might sound repetitive, incoherent or unclear according to the discourse conventions underlying English scientific papers.

Although this might remind one of Contrastive Analysis, I should like to stress that I am aware that pedagogical implications derived from such studies have been aptly criticized on the grounds that not all contrasts between L1 and L2 actually interfere with second language development. I refer the reader to Gass & Selinker (1983) for a detailed discussion of the debate around the notion of transfer, for it would be well beyond the scope of this research to dwell on this aspect of second language development; however, since I accept the argument behind the criticism of pedagogies based on Contrastive Analysis, I feel obliged to make it clear that what I am proposing is a pedagogy based

on a rather different conception of Contrastive Analysis. Namely, it is not the contrast between L1 and L2 as such that I think is important the SL2 writer should become aware of, but the contrast between target L2 discourse conventions and the faulty discourse of his own L2 texts.

In other words, I believe that by comparing and contrasting the ways in which they attempt to express meanings through writing with the ways similar meanings have been expressed in the target language, SL2 writers can acquire parameters for evaluating their own prose, and subsequently make their own decisions as to what needs and what needn't be rejected in their first drafts. It is obvious that this does not mean I am advocating a return to product-imitation, and that SL2 writers should simply pour their meanings into the mould of canonical English scientific papers. It is clear that models of discourse do not show how ideas can be expressed through writing, but only how ideas have been expressed through writing (Donaldson 1978; Vygotsky 1962). Still, it is important for SL2 writers to become aware of how ideas have been expressed through L2 texts in order to develop a self-sufficient feeling for L2 discourse conventions. True, this type of selective reading, i.e., of reading with a specific awareness of how L2 discourse has been organized, is obviously not in and of itself enough; SL2 writers must then try to work out the possibilities they have become aware of in practice. For example, the SL2 writer who wishes to learn how to produce the language of

English scientific papers must try to write scientific papers in English by allowing the standards his reading has enabled him to become aware of to orient him. Thus rather than adapting their intended meanings to the form of model passages, what SL2 writers can be trained to do is use the L2 discourse conventions learned from reading authentic texts by native-speakers in order to make sure their meanings are read as intended.

Of course, neither SL2 writers nor L2 writing teachers need externalize their knowledge of such differences in the ways a linguist would. According to Sharwood-Smith (1981), this kind of consciousness can be accomplished without one having to talk about what one has become aware of. Still, maybe what is most needed is a compromise between the linguist's consciousness and the learner's unspoken intuitions: didactic explanations on L2 discourse conventions could accelerate the process of helping SL2 writers to develop an autonomous feeling for such conventions while reading and writing in L2.

The rôle of the writing teacher would not be to advise these writers on how to plan, write, reread and revise, but to reinforce their awareness of L2 discourse conventions by providing **decentred** feedback during their idiosyncractic planning, writing, rereading and revising subprocesses of writing. In this way it is possible to train SL2 writers to apply their acquired knowledge of L2 discourse conventions

at any point during the activity of writing, without trying to change their presumably already efficient writing behaviour, and without trying to teach them writing skills they already possess. After all, if L1 writing skills are applied to L2 contexts (Edelsky 1982), I see no reason why these skills should be taught all over again.

What I mean by decentred feedback is feedback of the type "This section of your text sounds unclear because there seems to be little tolerance for this kind of digression in English scientific papers, even if in your L1 it might be acceptable" or, to take Regent's (1985) example of the greater use of typographical markers in French scientific papers, "English scientific papers seem to be less fragmented, they have less sub-titles, is it different in French?". That is to say, decentred feedback is feedback which makes it clear to the learner that he is required to operate under the rules of a system which is not better or worse, but which is different from the system he is originally familiar with.

Perhaps just as important as providing the SL2 writer with negative evidence is to provide him with positive feedback as well. To tell an SL2 writer that certain constructions in his text have an especially felicitous effect in the L2 can prompt him to develop the use of such constructions when he writes in L2. This kind of positive and negative decentred feedback, it seems, is not only more explicit,

more encouraging and less patronizing, but, above all, it can make more sense to the SL2 writer who is used to organizing texts in terms of the discursial logic of a different language. Besides, it can certainly make the SL2 writer feel more secure about the alternatives available in the target language when he is forced to make his own planning, writing and revising decisions in the absence of teacher feedback.

Arguably, it could be said that an awareness of L2 discourse conventions could result in unnecessary psychological constraints that would mentally overburden the SL2 writer, and hence catalyse the washback side-effect of blocking his fluency. Krashen and Terrel (1983), for example, maintain that second language development can only be achieved via the spontaneous acquisition route. One must remember, however, that unlike speakers, writers can plan and modify what they want to say in a written text. As pointed out in section 2.1, this is especially true in the case of skilled writers tackling cognitively demanding tasks, who tend to plan and revise their texts to a much greater extent than unskilled writers. Hence, the writing-as-activity of skilled writers is something that tends to take place over a considerable period of time; before a text is finalized, skilled writers frequently use the permanent quality of written language to their advantage in order to rethink and revise their initial drafts.

As Luria (1982:166) put it, writing

"...involves conscious operations with linguistic categories. These can be carried out at a far slower rate of processing than is possible in oral speech, and one can go over the product several times."

If an SL2 writer senses that his awareness of how native writers have organized discourse is blocking him, he need not overanalyse his words before they are put to paper; but for his writing-as-product to conform to the expectations of native readers, he must learn how to analyse his initial drafts with the eyes of a native reader and make the necessary alterations to his text in the process of rewriting. I believe it is possible for an SL2 writer to imagine how a native reader would react to his texts if he is able to compare what he has produced with the ways similar meanings have been expressed in similar genres in the L2; whatever appears to be strikingly different is likely to be what most violates the sociocultural expectations of native readers.

If SL2 writers are taught how to develop a measure of what conforms and what does not conform to the target language discourse conventions, they can utilize this knowledge to reject what is likely to violate the sociocultural expectations of native readers, and this very rejection can be a learning experience. The next time they write in L2 the probability of their having to reject again what they already rejected once will be smaller. That is to say, I

believe that certain ways of organizing discourse that have been rejected by an SL2 writer in his revision of a text can be rejected in the planning stage of future texts produced by the same writer. At length, this might enable SL2 writers to bridge the gap between a deliberate awareness of how native writers have organized discourse and a more spontaneous use of L2 discourse conventions in all stages of writing.

The idea that conscious learning promotes non-conscious development is not novel (Vygotsky 1962); what remains to be tested is whether indeed SL2 writers can gain feedback-independence and produce more readable texts in L2 after becoming aware of the differences between the ways they are used to expressing meanings through writing and the ways meanings are normally expressed in the L2.

Notes to chapter two

1. For the purpose of such studies, usually the skilled writers were those who took up writing as a profession, whereas the unskilled were by and large American college freshmen learning how to write in academic prose.

2. Of course this raises the question of whether UL2 writers would benefit from process instruction conducted in an L2 rather than in the L1. L2 process instruction is most probably beneficial when the L1 of an L2 writer is not a literate language, i.e., when the L2 writer is probably unskilled because he is learning both the L2 and how to write at the same time. L2 process instruction is also probably justifiable when for some reason or other UL2 writers find it more useful to compose in an L2 than in their own L1. In both cases, writing skill is likely to be considerably more relevant to the L2 context since there is comparatively little or no use for this type of knowledge in the L1 context. It is obvious, however, that the above question cannot be reasonably discussed any further in purely theoretical terms. In order to take a stand with regard to such a controversial issue, it is necessary to consider the various sociolinguistic implications of teaching writing process in an L2. This is only possible if one is fully aware of the specific linguistic and situational contexts in which the teaching would take place. Let me therefore make it clear that the present study is not sociolinguistically oriented.

3. To my knowledge, this distinction has not been adequately dealt with in the literature in the past. Zamel (op.cit.), for example, has often referred to high proficiency L2 writers without making it sufficiently clear whether this proficiency was relative to their writing abilities or whether it had to do with their level of second language development.

4. The way in which development along the axis of proficiency is graphically represented is, for the sake of clarity, obviously a great simplification. I do not wish to convey the idea that strictly linguistic proficiency necessarily precedes discursal proficiency. The two may be acquired at the same time.

5. The term *decentre* is borrowed from Donaldson (1978), who uses it to describe the act of coming to understand that one's egocentric system exists among other possible systems.