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Research developments in the area of writing in the last ten years have led to a variety of approaches to the classroom teaching of writing. In Australia teachers have been exposed in more recent years to a major debate between the 'process' and 'genrist' approaches to the teaching of writing. This paper outlines the features of the major approaches and then proposes an alternative 'middle ground' or 'integrated' approach to the teaching of writing.

Process Approach

The teaching of writing in Australia has been heavily influenced by Donald Graves (1983). Curriculum documents, extensive inservice and teacher training programmes all currently reflect a Graves 'process' approach to writing instruction. The procedures he advocates have two major components: recursive revision and freedom of choice in the selection of topics. The writing process refers to everything a writer does from the first contemplation of a topic to the final completion of the written piece. Graves (1983) states that 'students can be lectured on the components of the process, but they still only know process by actually doing the writing, making words fulfill their intention' (p. 250).

Fundamental to this approach is the belief that there is a difference between writers and their composing process needs, i.e. a 3 year old composes differently from a 6 year old or a 12 year old. Similarly, two 6 year olds may have quite different composing needs depending upon their background experiences, knowledge of the topic or their purpose in writing. Whilst there exists a fundamental difference in an individuals composing process there are also many similarities. It is then the teacher’s responsibility to create an environment which not only supports the individual but which facilitates their development as a writer/learner. Central to the process approach is the monitoring of individual children's writing development. Teachers keep samples
of children's writing in individual portfolios. Each sample is examined and analysed for growth in writing development and understandings as a writer. See Figures 1, 2 and 3 for examples of one child's writing development through a 'process' oriented approach.

Pot with Flowers

Notes on writing development
Understands that an idea can be represented in print.
Shows some awareness of conventions: directionality, letter shapes (from name)

(E.L.I.C., 1985 pp. 24)

Figure 1
Anastasia's Writing Development – 5 years
9th February, 1982.
My Dinosaur

my dinosaur
has got long teeth
he is growing. His name is Diplodocus.

He is dead. I so dead.
so dead my dinosaur
15 15 yrs old.

Anastasia Feb 83

Notes on writing development
Provision of detail, demonstrating possible awareness of readers. First appearance of revision 'ded' for 'dod'.

(E.L.I.C., 1985 pp. 35)

Figure 2
Anastasia's Writing Development - 6 years
February, 1983.
The Hungry Monster

Once there was a big fat monster, and every big bean and he began again. But nothing happened.

"Well," he said, "I will yet just have to go and find my brekkie."

"What looks good?"" went gulp gulp and them look good. gulp gulp. And what is this? I might have a one or two bites gulp gulp. All gone oh oh oh feel sick...

Notes on writing development

Anastasia’s writing repertoire is increasing. She has more tools to use in engaging the reader. Her greater confidence with conventions and organisation leaves her space to experiment in other areas.

(E.L.I.C., 1985 pp. 43)

Figure 3
Anastasia’s Writing Development
October, 1983.
Through a 'process' approach many teachers have been fired with a new found enthusiasm for teaching writing. As teachers come to an understanding of the approach and the reality of what it means in the classroom, many have however created classroom practices which run contrary to the inherent beliefs which underly the approach itself. Some teachers are seen insisting that children adhere to a linear sequence of writing which includes steps such as completing two set drafts or teacher editing away from the student. Others insist that all drafts should be published and that topics always relate to the theme or unit being studied. Implementation problems such as these prompted Graves (1984) to beg teachers not to turn his ideas into 'orthodoxy', however in many classrooms orthodoxy it has become.

Whilst the Graves' process approach was suffering these 'teething problems', it has also come under criticism. Specifically Hillocks (1986) and Rothery and Martin (1986) questioned the idea that children should be allowed to freely select their topics and the form of expression their piece of writing may take. Their criticisms include the lack of guidance for children in their development as writers and for teachers in the formation of writing syllabus. In Graves' defence however, it would seem unfair to criticise him on the latter as he has never said explicitly that his approach was a syllabus.

Environmentalist Approach

Hillocks (1986) advocates an approach to writing called 'environmental', listing characteristics of the approach such as:

- clear and specific objectives;
- specific materials and concrete short term problems for students to achieve;
- problems selected to promote the understanding of a specific form of writing; and
- activities in which small-group problem solving sessions precede individual written responses.
In addition he outlines how the environmental approach should involve a written communication among 'non-judgemental' peers. This implies a need for an audience; however, like Graves he does not address in any detail how to create an 'authentic' audience or how much procedural guidance should be given to students. In short, he is silent as to what constitutes a specific written form and how teachers should go about task of teaching it.

**Genrist Approach**

An alternative approach, a 'genrist' position was advocated by Martin and Rothery in 1986. They have taken the ideas of 'communicative competence' developed by Hymes (1972) and Halliday's (1975) notion of 'linguistic function' in oral language and applied them to written language. That is, they have drawn a parallel between the way a child learns to speak a language (the forms and registers) and the way they learn to write. Specifically a 'genrist' approach examines what Christie (1989) calls 'curriculum genres' from the point of view of assessing current teaching methodology and the ways in which teachers use their knowledge of language structures to teach writing more effectively.

Their model as stated is based upon the work of M.A.K. Halliday. Essentially the model focusses upon 'meaning' and how language is 'structured' to mean. It explores, in a systematic manner, how the structure of language assists people to achieve their language purposes in social contexts. In the oral and written mode, how the linguistic genres enable writers to get their meaning across and to get things done ie. to share, to find out, to describe, to report, to argue etc. See Figure 4, for a sample breakdown of one generic structure – report, as outlined in Callaghan & Rothery (1988). The fundamental contribution made by the genrists is the invocation of a 'parallel principle' between oral and written language form. 'Specifically they recommend that teachers share with the children the characteristics, the boundaries and the freedoms within those boundaries of the numerous forms we use to express ourselves in writing.' (Johnson, 1988 pp.20). The genrists however, also treat 'audience' and 'purpose' as a passing concern. They argue that they are not listing exact and unchanging structural 'recipes' for the various genres; however their
valuable contributions, like the Graves' process approach, are in danger of being mis-interpreted. Their ideas are being seen by some as a return to more traditional 'direct' teaching of written forms.

**Function**

Factual text which describes the way things are, with reference to a whole range of phenomena, natural, synthetic and social in our environment.

**Generic (Schematic) Structure**

- General Classification
- Description – parts (and their functions)
  - qualities
  - habits/behaviours (or 'uses' if non-natural)

**Language Features**

- Focus on Generic Participants (groups of things)
- Use of simple present tense (unless extinct)
- No temporal sequence
- Use of 'being' and 'having' processes.

(Callaghan & Rothery, 1988, p. 59)
Generic (Schematic) Structure

Dolphins.

Dolphins are sea mammals. They have to breathe air or they will die. They are members of the cetacea family.

Dolphins hunt together in a group. A group of dolphins is called a pod. They eat fish, shrimp and small squid. They live in salt water oceans. Dolphins can hold their breath for six minutes.

Dolphins have smooth bare skin. Only baby dolphins are born with a few bristly hairs on their snouts. These hairs soon fall out. They have a long tail and the fin on top of their backs keeps the dolphins from rolling over. The female dolphins have a thick layer of fat under their skin to keep them warm when they dive very deep. The dolphins front fins are called flippers. They use them to turn left and right.

Dolphins grow from 2 to 3 metres long and weigh up to 75 kilograms.

When dolphins hear or see a ship close by, they go near it and follow it for many kilometers. Dolphins can leap out of the water and do somersaults. Sometimes they invent their own tricks and stunts after watching other dolphins perform.

Dolphins are very friendly to people and have never harmed anyone. They are very playful mammals.

(Callaghan & Rothery, 1988, p. 61)

Figure 4
Structural Outline And Features Of The 'Report' Genre
It is without doubt the Graves' approach has had the most widespread support by teachers and in the published literature. However there has been in the late 1980's an increase in publications and research to support the 'genrist' approach to the teaching of writing. Collerson (1988), Macken (1988), (1989) and Derewianka (1990) outline procedures and considerations for implementing this genrist approach in the classroom. Likewise various state departments of education are now calling for curriculum documents to reflect either the Graves 'freedom' approach and/or the Martin and Rothery 'genrist' approach to the teaching of writing.

The result for many Australian teachers is confusion, as it would appear they are almost being asked to choose between two competing teams. Debates between the so called camps have become a feature at language conferences. These debates have also spawned groups of teachers who follow, in guru like mentality, the beliefs and practices of their particular team leaders. Whilst this may be seen by some academics as a healthy sign of the esustained interest in the once 'Cinderella' of language education, 'writing', the development of the practical teaching implications of the theories are seen to be in danger of becoming stagnant as members of the teams spend their time apparently lobbying for followers.

**An Integrated Approach – one alternative**

There is however an alternate group of teachers who subscribe to an **Integrated** or as the title of this paper suggests, a theoretical **fence sitting** approach to the teaching of writing. Their approach is to adopt features of writing instruction based upon the major principles of all three theories. These 'fence-sitters' believe that what is required in a balanced writing programme is freedom of choice in topic selection, freedom for the children to experiment with a variety of written forms and a heavy emphasis upon creating authentic purposes for writing. They accept that writing is not learned by chance or in a vacuum. Therefore beginning writers require direct, explicit 'demonstrations' of the various written forms and opportunities to analyse 'models' in order to re-create their form based upon their own level of understanding.
The creation of 'authentic' learning experiences arises from the children being involved in oral and written try-outs of the particular genre form. They are encouraged to explore the field of the language in which the form is found and then move on as exploration within the field generates needs for focusing upon different genres. The integrated writing approach addresses directly the notion of 'authenticity' which the other theories leave to chance and attempts to reflect the needs of the children in the class.

The classroom experiences advocated are based upon a student-centred need or purpose. For example, if a child feels the need to improve their own understanding of 'essay writing' then the writing programme should be flexible enough to cater for the need. However, the reality is that due to the numbers in classes and syllabus limitations etc. this may not always be possible. So the responsibility falls to the teacher to engender an interest in and the maintenance of a functional, purpose-filled writing context which follows closely the individual needs of the children.

Once the need and purpose has been established the teacher and children set out to explore the genre. They generally begin by examining 'authentic' models of the genre both in the written and oral mode. For example one class in a study of 'report writing' in Science began by recording the school sports' reports at weekly assemblies and then proceeded to analysing the form and function of news reports, school reports, published scientific reports, management and police reports. Through the examination of such a variety of report styles in both the oral and written modes the children came to a more concise understanding of the language within the field and the varying generic structures. Each day the children are involved in trying out and refining their understandings through writing sessions. The genre being examined and understandings shared through peer conferences, small and whole class group discussions.

Another distinguishing feature of the integrated approach is the use of 'demonstrations' as the predominant teaching methodology. From Smith (1982) it was learned than any literacy event provides a complex set of demonstrations. For example, a child watching a teacher sitting, typing at a computer terminal is witnessing many demonstrations. These are demonstrations of how the teacher uses
the computer, the value the teacher holds for writing, how the teacher writes and edits their writing. They witness 'first hand' the teacher's level of expertise and control over their learning. Smith suggests that in the act of engaging with a demonstration, the child is free to select and attend to those aspects of the demonstration which are related to his/her needs at that time. That is, they select only particular aspects of the demonstration to incorporate into their learning. It is important to note that 'demonstrating' should not be confused with 'modeling'. Modeling in the literature suggests how something must be done where-as a demonstration, in the integrated writing classroom, is only a display of how something may be done.

In the integrated writing programme the teacher consciously selects specific writing demonstrations to undertake each day. On other occasions the demonstrations are spontaneous as the teacher reacts to the needs of individuals or groups within the class. The demonstrations are kept short and specific, no more than ten minutes at a time. With the whole class watching the teacher demonstrates for example how a written draft may be edited. The children watch the demonstration and then are free to ask questions of the teacher about their process or the motives behind it. If required the teacher may, but not always, ask the class to complete a follow-up exercise based upon the demonstration. Many of these exercises are similar to those advocated by the environmentalists in Hillocks (1986). These exercises allow the children to experiment with a concept and then report back on their understanding. An important feature of demonstrating is the belief that children are free to learn from the demonstration, that they are in control of their learning and that just like when they are learning to talk, they will make errors and will need time to approximate a language item or form. In short, they the children, are not expected to attain full blown adult competence after one demonstration, therefore multiple demonstrations may be necessary.

Throughout the writing process, that is the entire composing, revising, editing and publishing process there are a multitude of potential demonstrations many of which may be selected by the teacher to be whole class demonstrations while others may be left to an individual conference with the child. It is through these demonstrations that selective aspects of the genrist theory are introduced.
Case Study

For example a study of 'narrative' began following the publishing by many students of individual short stories. Through a sharing session the teacher and students saw the need to improve the quality of their story writing. The children were experienced with the use of process writing however had no previous direct input regarding the structure of the various written forms.

Through demonstration and follow-up activities the children were involved in the analysis of a variety of different stories. Storytellers were interviewed, videos and films examined. The students were given demonstrations of how linguists determine the structure of texts by asking questions like 'What is happening to the text here?' or 'What function does it serve?'. On the basis of these demonstrations the children were asked to examine and analyse examples of different text which they thought to be stories. They were asked to develop their own categories and names to describe the structures they found. Many of the students relied solely upon the teacher demonstration and the structures mentioned while others developed their own terminology and structures. Still others branched out into other genres, which required specific group demonstrations by the teacher. One group discovered and concluded that many people confused stories, fairy tales, legends and recounts and that each would need to be studied individually to fully understand 'narrative'.

Throughout this process of model analysis, demonstration and text reconstruction the children were writing. As the class continued drafting many children discovered that although their pieces had better structure, they still lacked elements found in what they described as 'good' stories. One of these elements turned out to be 'description'. As this was seen to be important to their needs as writers the teacher and the class immersed themselves in models of description. Once again they began the analysis, deconstruction, reconstruction process. From descriptions the class went onto examining other text types: 'recounts', 'reports' and 'essays', each time producing a published piece which reflected their individual understanding of the written form.
Summary

An integrated approach provides the guidance for teachers and children through specific demonstrations of written language forms (genrist approach). It allows a freedom of choice in topic selection and encourages the recursive nature of the writing process (Graves' approach). Activities are selected to follow-up demonstrations which encourage achievable small group problem solving tasks, specific to the written form each having clear spelt out objectives (environmentalist approach).

The integrated approach views oral and written language as parallel systems with overlapping functions, specifically at the beginning stages. The approach recognises that these functions do not totally overlap however they are not seen to be totally separate either. In addition, the integrated approach builds upon the existing knowledge of the learner, provides authentic audiences through the publishing of material and examination of authentic real world models of writing.

Conclusion

The 'fence-sitting' analogy like most analogies of writing is inappropriate in that 'fence sitter' implies the teacher's role to be passive or inactive. However, on the contrary, the integrated approach to writing requires the teacher to be proactive. Their approach varies with their knowledge, preparedness to get involved in the 'co-operative' nature of the programme and the individual teacher's skills in classroom organisation. Whilst the implementation of their programmes are flexible, the integrated writing teacher's 'theoretical groundrules' reflect a 'middle ground' in the current Australian writing debate. As the need arises they are seen to be open to alternative suggestions, prepared to experiment and adapt their writing programmes, as opposed to defending rigid orthodoxies.
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