

Perspectives

Procedural and Conceptual Parallels Between Student and Teacher Product-Driven Writing Projects

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In this paper the author describes a product-oriented approach to writing, one that applies equally to students and to teachers who write. In a project activity where the product is to be showcased in a collection of writings, the end product is visualized first, and the writing process is then conceptualized as the strategies and activities needed to reach that end. Other key similarities between student and teacher product-driven writing are that (a) writing is best viewed from a whole-language perspective; (b) error correction is necessary and purposeful; (c) public writing is inevitably assessed; and (d) writing activities and final products are multivocalic. While product-driven writing projects do not suit all teachers and students, they can be adapted and designed to suit many different contexts and purposes.

本論では、「結果としての作品」中心のライティング法 (product-oriented approach) について考察する。このライティング法は、書き手が教師の場合もあり、また学習者の場合もある。作文を文集にまとめるプロジェクト学習では、最終的に書き上がった状態を目標とし、推敲のプロセスを計画的に行うことはその目標到達に至る戦略と考えることができる。また、このライティング法では、書き手が教師の場合と、書き手が学習者の場合とに共通する重要な項目として、以下のことが挙げられる。a) ライティングを言語運用能力全体の視点から捉えることができる、b) 誤りの訂正は必要かつ意味がある、c) 読み手を想定して書かれているため、書かれたものは評価の対象になる、d) 作品集は多様な意見や価値観を反映したものになる。文集作成のような作品中心型のプロジェクトは、どのような学習場面においても実施できるとは言えないが、多くの異なる学習場面や学習目的に適合させ、取り入れることが可能である。

The point of this paper is not to prescribe how to carry out specific writing projects, or to describe writing projects that teachers and students can select from. Neither is it to recommend an array of purposes for which teachers and students should write. I leave all of these decisions, in their contextually complex specifics, to teachers and students themselves. In this paper, rather, I wish to lay out some

procedural and conceptual ideas about one way of thinking about the writing that teachers and students do when they visualize and commit to what comes at the end. This "end," this product, must be visualized by each writer and each writing teacher, and it must serve some meaningful purpose for writers, whether innovative or conventional, beyond mechanical exercises. I urge readers, therefore, not to seek answers in this paper, but to identify issues and ponder questions that may be applied to their own settings.

Two basic ideas form the foundation of my message. The first is that much meaningful writing in school settings and in teachers' professional lives begins with a conceptualization (clear or fuzzy) in the writer's mind of an end product. The drive to finish a meaningful piece of writing then provides the impetus for writers to develop and practice a variety of goal-driven writing processes. This idea in itself is not so startling. In the case of student writing, it gets more complex when we transport it to the many different writing classrooms we work in, classrooms that include students of all ages, proficiency levels in English, and motivations. Some of the language educators I work with protest that their students cannot write a correct sentence, let alone a meaningful product. Such a view represents a linear approach to the acquisition of writing skills which posits that students acquire one piece of the language puzzle at a time, in some kind of rational sequence of simple to complex. The position I take here is decidedly nonlinear, because it accommodates any level of language proficiency, much as does a whole language approach to literacy acquisition (Freeman & Freeman, 1989). A whole and meaningful product can be defined for any group of learners, just as it can for any teacher who writes, and can then be used to guide the entire array of writing activities needed to get there.

A second idea underlies this paper, one that we do not see discussed much in the literature on writing. That idea concerns the fundamental similarity between the product-oriented writing that students do in their language classes and the writing that many teachers and researchers do as part of their professional lives. We tend to separate our notions of writing into that which students do and that which teachers do, perhaps because we believe that what students need to learn differs greatly from what teachers need to learn and practice in their own writing. This is particularly the case if we conflate the teaching of linguistic aspects of language with the teaching of writing. We also tend to separate student and teacher writing because we view only students' writing as formally assessed and graded. But these differences blur if we conceptualize writing from a different perspective: We can view both students and teachers as learners who develop expertise in writing by being immersed

in purposeful writing contexts. Both need to become aware of the strategic options available to them and have their writing assessed critically (whether the final "grade" is a letter or number, or an acceptance or rejection for publication). Viewing writing this way, we can postulate a surprising number of similarities in the skills and processes needed to reach our goals. I believe that teachers who write, and who perceive the similarities between their efforts and writing and those of their students, will improve the effectiveness of their writing instruction. I believe that they will also become better writers themselves as a result of their increased awareness of how the strategies and processes and conceptual aspects of writing apply to themselves.

In this paper, I discuss the two foundational ideas mentioned above, both of which can help teachers think about their own writing and that of their students in ways that blur the student-teacher hierarchy. In the first half of the paper, I note several kinds of products that teachers and students might put together as collections, then describe briefly some basic steps that must be orchestrated, guided by the visualization of where writers want to end up. In the second half of the paper, I consider some conceptual similarities between student and teacher writing, when both student and teacher are viewed as learners involved in product-driven writing projects. I look at some of the assumptions underlying what I refer to as a product-driven approach to writing projects, and suggest some ways of thinking about this approach that work similarly for both students and teachers who write. I conclude the paper with some caveats and some words of encouragement.

The Product as Guide to Process

The Products

In keeping with the message of this paper, I'd like now to begin at the end, with a conceptualization of just a few of many possible writing products. It is with a conceptualization of where writers wish to end up that all the procedural steps and strategies that come before can be laid out. In conceptualizing the end, writers and writing teachers need not concern themselves so much with devising projects that are innovative as they do with devising projects that are meaningful and purposeful for the writers. While there are many kinds of products (including electronic ones such as those described by Susser, 1993), the ones I describe briefly here are edited collections of student and teacher writings. They come from my own experiences as an editor of several college publications and student collections compiled by teachers on my own campus

and at other schools where writing is one of the focuses of more general English classes. Teachers need to imagine what their own and their students' writing might look like, of course, and to delineate their own purposes for writing.

Two kinds of student writing products will no doubt be familiar to many readers. The first consists of a collection of student writings (essays, journals, research reports, stories, film reviews, poems, cookbooks, or guidebooks) that students have worked on over time during the school term and are edited and compiled by a student editorial committee or a teacher. The second kind of student product consists of a quickly but intensely produced collection of some kind, unrevised or partially revised, such as children's reports and drawings of their interviews with a foreign visitor to their class (Kazue Hirose, October, 1997, personal communication). Both kinds of writing collections can include cover and interior hand-drawn or computer graphics, photographs, author autobiographical statements, or other additions that personalize the collection. These can be as innovative or as conventional as students and teachers wish. The student collections are distributed to all class members and teachers, sometimes to other groups of students, and to visitors to the campus (including interviewees who may be part of the project), fulfilling the goal of writing for an audience of real readers (Kuriloff, 1996).

The primary example of teacher writing products that I am most familiar with is an edited collection of articles written by colleagues on the teachers' own campus, possibly with contributions from colleagues on other campuses, and published by the university or—in the absence of funds or support—in copied form by the teachers themselves. These publications may be labeled in various ways, such as journals, monographs, or working papers. The advantage of a writing project geared to the university-supported publication is that it tends to be compiled much more quickly and with less outside critical evaluation than is the case with articles submitted to refereed journals. In Japan, this outlet for teachers' writing exists quite widely, in that university publications (*kiyou*) of various kinds are the norm more than the exception. In my experiences helping to produce such volumes designed to give teachers a collegial experience with conventional writing for professional development, we have typically sent out a call for papers on our own campus and distributed the call among colleagues we know on other campuses. Interested teachers send in abstracts (note that this first step is itself a description of the final product), and we (the teacher-editors) select those which seem appropriate for our theme-based volume. Then we meet several times during the writing process in peer-reading groups to discuss and comment on one another's drafts. Editors are responsible

for preparing a camera-ready copy. The university may or may not distribute copies to university libraries in Japan, but authors receive copies to distribute to colleagues and classes, and those of us in teacher education distribute copies to our graduate students. In today's Internet world, such collections of both student and teacher writing can also be compiled and distributed electronically.

These collections represent one place where student and teacher writers can end up. The main project work, then, is the managing and carrying out of the activities that will get writers there by a certain deadline imposed by the constraints of a school term and institutional regulations.

Identifying and Orchestrating the Steps

Let me now turn to a brief discussion of some of the procedural realities involved in preparing a collection of student or teacher writings. While the details and time allotments will differ in each case, each group of teacher and student writers needs to identify and orchestrate the stages of a writing project so that the final product is completed by whatever deadline has been decided or imposed. This structuring of the tasks and processes necessitates that writers begin at the end, with the deadline date, and work backwards. The teacher, or the person who is acting as editor, plays a key role here as the manager of time-constrained activities.

To sum up the steps in the kind of product-oriented writing project that I have referred to in this paper, I list them here, beginning at the end:

- END
- Copying and distribution
 - Final product due
 - Camera-ready copy prepared
 - Addition of final details such as cover, page numbers, contents
 - Final draft to editorial committee
 - Rounds of drafting, reading, commenting, and revising
 - Rounds of topic-narrowing and resource-building
 - Topic ideas and abstracts prepared and discussed with a writing group
 - Project description and schedule distributed, participants commit to the project
- START • Project ideas formulated and negotiated

In my experience, the three stages of a writing project always require more time than I expect in the case of both students and teachers who write. First, at the very end of the process, a significant amount of time may be required to prepare a typo-free camera-ready copy, perhaps with

page numbers and a table of contents, cover designs or illustrations, and writer biostatements. Some of this work can be anticipated, and therefore prepared ahead of time, but some must wait until the last minute.

Second, rounds of peer and editor or teacher review, followed by writer revision always take longer than planned. For example, in the best of cases, turn-around time on just one set of student or collegial papers requires a minimum of two weeks: a week for the teacher, peer, or editor to read and comment, and another week for writers to revise. In my roles as writing teacher and editor of collegial publications, I have never been able to arrange it so that everyone in a student or collegial group meets these tight turn-around times, nor am I usually able to meet them myself when I am writing. What often happens is that writers do fewer revisions than they would like to do, or the final publication comes out late—if there is any flexibility with deadlines. Occasionally some writers who lag far behind the deadlines choose not to include their pieces in the final publication, a decision that neither students nor collegial writers should be penalized for. Ideally, participation in the full writing project is voluntary.

Third, very early in the writing process, topic narrowing invariably requires much more time than I expect. This is the case whether I am working with students' writing, my own writing, or that of my colleagues. Sometimes student writers, teachers of writing, and teachers who write harbor the illusion that a writing topic will reveal itself whole and intact to the writer (they hope at some point early in the writing process), and that the writer's job is simply to flesh it out. I believe this can happen, but only rarely. More commonly, a topic develops slowly as writers immerse themselves in a project, as they become more knowledgeable as result of research and collaborative experiences—locating resources from the library or Internet, writing in journals, discussing ideas with peers and teachers, and developing in the process a voice and a stance. The writers' ideas shift, narrow, and accumulate detail as writers become further immersed in a project. The topic-focusing part of the writing process must therefore be nurtured and celebrated over time, since this aspect represents the heart of the writing process in a product-oriented project.

Making Links and Dovetailing

A writing project of the sort I describe in this paper cannot easily be carried out without writers' connecting the writing activities to other aspects of their student or professional lives. There simply is no time in most students' and teachers' lives to duplicate efforts that can be dovetailed with a writing project. In a writing project classroom, lessons in

reading, library and Internet use, grammar, vocabulary building, rhetorical conventions, discussion, debate, and presentation can all be connected to a writing project. In the busy lives of teachers, a writing project can be linked to issues and questions that have arisen in their own classroom teaching and research. A writing project can also be shaped to fit a school's requirements for professional activities or dovetailed with conference presentations and local workshops (and yes, added to a curriculum vitae). The point is to recognize the many possible links to valuable professional and language learning and teaching activities and to make these links work for the furtherance of both a writing project goal and related goals in the busy lives of students and teachers.

Student and Teacher Writers as Learners: Conceptual Similarities

Having considered the procedural steps that unfold in similar ways for teachers and students who write in a product-oriented approach to writing projects, I turn now to common conceptual issues—ways of thinking about product-oriented writing activities—that apply to teachers and students who write.

Whole-Language Assumptions

Edelsky (1997) and others have pointed out that "whole-language" approaches to teaching and learning are multiple and diverse; discussions and disputes surrounding whole language are both political and pedagogical. Nevertheless, certain assumptions seem to be shared, fundamental ones being that language used in classrooms should not be fragmented into separate subskills, that language activities are inherently social and communicative, and that the ways we use and practice language should always be meaningful and purposeful.

Freeman and Freeman (1989) outline six principles of whole language, which apply equally to students and teachers—if we consider teachers as learners. They point out that "language classes should be learner centered" (p. 178). Language activities should draw on the interests and experiences of the writers. Moreover, language "is best learned when kept whole" (p. 179). Writers, whether student or teacher, need to begin the task of writing by working with whole texts, then dealing with the parts, rather than trying to build a whole from the study of the pieces. Third, they note that "language instruction should employ all four modes: listening, speaking, reading, and writing" (p. 180). This principle suggests that writers should draw on multiple sources of language data—reading, discussing, exchanging ideas, writing—as normal activities associated with the writing process. Fourth, Freeman and

Freeman remind us that the language we use in a writing activity “should be meaningful and functional” (p. 180). It is not only our students who need to be aware of and committed to a purpose in their writing; teachers too need to write purposefully. A fifth principle states that “language is learned through social interaction” (p. 181). Not only should students be talking to one another and to the teacher, but teachers themselves need to be talking with each other during the process of writing if our own learning is to advance. (See the discussion of multivocality below.) Finally, Freeman and Freeman note that “language is learned when teachers have faith in learners” (p. 182), echoing the widely held belief that people live up (or down) to their expectations. This principle applies not only to our students, but also to ourselves. Teachers need to believe that they can write and that their colleagues can too, given whatever guidance or mentoring they might need in a collegial writing group.

Procedural Flexibility

As early as 1984, Reid (1984), in identifying both the “radical outliner” and the “radical brainstormer” as potentially expert writers, suggested that what inexperienced writers need to learn is not a defined set of so-called expert writing processes (e.g., as described by early proponents of process approaches such as Flower & Hayes, 1980; Raimes, 1987; Zamel, 1982), but an array of strategies that fit their own individual and cultural styles. What seems clear now is that all experienced writers flexibly manipulate their writing processes to fit different kinds of products, purposes, and personal writing preferences. Part of the job of writing teachers, then, is to help students develop this flexibility (Reid, 1994), and the job of teachers who write is to become aware of and practice selected strategies and processes themselves. Different writing processes and strategies, in other words, will be called upon quite naturally as writers become aware of ways they can effectively achieve different kinds of goals.

Purposeful Attention to Details

Two common beliefs have emerged out of process approaches to writing: Expert writers do not get themselves bogged down in the mechanical aspects of editing and proofreading as they write, and teachers have a responsibility to help students learn to postpone error correction until late in the drafting process. As support for this latter view, many studies of error correction have demonstrated that teachers may be wasting time correcting grammar errors on students' compositions because grammatical aspects of students' writing seem to im-

prove more from regular practice than they do as a result of having errors corrected (see the detailed critical review by Truscott, 1996).

But error correction has other purposes besides the elusive one of improving writers' linguistic accuracy. Other more functional goals exist, ones routinely employed by published writers and experienced student writers who are preparing a piece of writing for presentation to a public readership. Published writers not only focus their work of revising on large chunks of text where "re-vising" actually implies re-seeing. They also pay close attention to details of their writing correcting small errors assiduously, some as they write. Others edit and proofread only at final stages before sending a piece out for review and possible publication. Students, particularly graduate students, may also be required by their professors to turn in carefully proofread final papers. While this attention to the details of writing should not be confused with larger issues in composing, it is a normal aspect of the writing process of experienced writers.

In student writing projects such as those I refer to in this paper, students who correct errors in their writing before finishing a class publication are doing so for the personally meaningful purpose of producing a polished final product that will be shared with other readers. A polished piece of writing communicates effectively to readers not just because language refinements have helped clarify meaning but also because the readers' concentration is not marred by interruptions caused by surface infelicities. Moreover, a polished piece of writing stands as a representation of one's self, something to take pride in before a public audience. In the case of student writers, the pride that results may contribute to improved motivation, confidence, and interest in writing, all thought to be factors that help explain writing quality (Hirose & Sasaki, 1994, p. 219). The same arguments for the motivating influence of seeing one's own polished piece of writing in print can be made for teachers' writing.

Error correction, then, is not viewed as a perfunctory activity or a language acquisition exercise, but as a normal activity that all writers do at one stage or another to advance a piece of writing to a stage at which it will be presented to a public audience. Other kinds of writing, such as "freewriting" (Elbow, 1973) and journal writing (Casanave, 1994), are equally important in the overall picture of writing. The main purposes of these may be for writers to develop fluency, ideas, expressiveness, and "natural" (i.e., uninstructed) language development through practice. In these cases, error correction is generally avoided altogether, whether writers are students or professionals.

Inevitable Assessment

A successful product-driven writing project for both students and teachers is driven by much more than the writer's hope for a good grade or for a new item on a curriculum vitae. It is driven by the writer's belief that he or she has something worthwhile to say to an audience of real readers and that writing to communicate to those readers will help clarify and extend the writer's own thinking and knowledge. Meaningful writing in the way I am conceptualizing it can often be undermined by our need to give students grades in traditional ways (Huot, 1996; Leki, 1990) or to fill out our own curriculum vitae. Still, it is inevitable that the public writing that students and teachers do will be assessed in one way or another. Students receive grades, if not for an individual piece of writing or collection of writings, at least for the class for which the writing was done. Students are clever and are not tricked by well-meaning teachers into believing that a piece of writing contributes nothing toward a grade.

Teachers do not receive grades as such for their public writing, but they are assessed nevertheless. The assessments might be quite formal, a report written by a tenure, promotion, or hiring committee or a written review of a piece of work submitted to a journal for possible publication. Though there are no letter grades, the results of such assessments on teachers' writing can have far-reaching consequences for a teacher's career. Teachers no doubt have more choices about whether and what they will write. Nevertheless, some teachers, like students in a required class, may find they need to write for publication in order to get or keep a job, whether they are interested in writing or not.

If assessment is inevitable, and if direct measures of writing are to be used in the process of evaluation (Hamp-Lyons, 1990, 1991), one potentially valuable solution is to develop a portfolio for each writer that represents a collection of work over time (Black, Daiker, Sommers, & Stygall, 1994; Yancey, 1992). Just as teachers who write have a collection of their best published and unpublished writing that they can draw on for career advancement, students too can compile their work into portfolios as a way to track their development as writers and to showcase their best work. Edited collections of student writing can then be considered "class portfolios" in that they indicate the end product of students' development as writers during a given period, such as one semester or one school year. Teachers' edited collections can be considered "collegial portfolios" in which the culmination of each teacher's current knowledge, thinking, and writing skills is represented by the finished pieces that appear in the collection.

Ideally, both students and teachers will write because they choose to, not because they are forced to. However, teachers who are committed to the notion of "meaningful writing" need to recognize that grades and curriculum vitae represent a very real and meaningful, though institutional, aspect of the academic lives of students and teachers and cannot be ignored. Managing the potential conflict between writing that is personally or institutionally meaningful requires ongoing vigilance and effort.

Writers as Learners in a Multivocalic Endeavor

By blurring the distinction between teacher as knower and student as learner, we can conceptualize all writers as learners. A well-designed writing project, one that can potentially motivate even reluctant student and teacher writers, will involve writers in topics they wish to learn more about, whatever their current level of expertise. The writers-as-learners are thus faced with the challenge of finding a voice that communicates ownership of a topic and a stance of authority even though they are in the process of learning. Achieving this balance between self as learner and self as authority, when one is not claiming full expertise, remains one of the most difficult aspects of writing for a public forum.

One way that student and teacher writers can conceptualize the development of a balanced voice is to recognize that the voice that is showcased in a piece of writing is really a collection of voices. It is blended from a writer's past and present social encounters with friends, family, teachers, and colleagues, and from interactions with other authors via reading materials. It can even be considered a blend of voices that has resulted from a writer's "conversations" with his or her many selves. According to Bakhtin (1986), this borrowing and blending of voices cannot but be otherwise. All writing is heteroglossic, in which context and multiple participants, real and envisioned, within and outside of texts, shape all textual and spoken utterances. As summarized by Hardcastle (1994, p. 42):

"The social relationship between the participants shapes the utterance and is shaped by it. The reactions of the listener are integrated in advance, . . . [and] the verbal materials employed always bear the marks of previous social encounters. . . . Every utterance, then, is related to previous utterances."

Embracing the inevitable multivocality of the activity of composing as well as of a finished piece of writing can help all writers recognize that having "conversations" with textual resources and consulting with others, not working alone, is an acceptable and desirable way for writers-as-learners to develop their own voices and to contribute to their evolving

expertise. In both classrooms and collegial writing groups, then, writers-as-learners draw actively on context and experience, read widely, and seek out discussions with others.

Some Final Thoughts

In this paper, I've described a way to think about one kind of writing to which both students and teachers might devote some portion of class time and professional life over a semester or a school year. I've highlighted some procedural and conceptual aspects of a product-driven writing project, where the visualization of a collection of writings, designed for presentation to the public, guides what comes before. I've posed the idea that the distinction between what students and teachers do as writers can profitably be blurred. This blurring can allow teachers to apply their own developing awareness of writing processes and concepts to their teaching and thus help students develop a similar awareness and an increased sense of control, involvement, and pride of accomplishment.

Still, a writing project that results in a publication of some kind may not be suited to everyone, nor is the time required to carry out most such projects available every semester or school year. Some teachers have classes that are much too large to allow for much editing and polishing of student writing, or they have classes where some students' motivation is low because the class requires all students to participate in activities they did not choose. Some teachers are caught up in the teaching of language, by choice or by circumstance, or they may not support whole-language approaches to teaching. Furthermore, some teachers themselves do not like writing or see the need to write, or they may lack a committed collegial writing support group, without which collegial writing projects can only reach fruition with difficulty. In such cases, teachers may choose not to do a writing project at all, or to devise a less labor-intensive project for themselves or their students. If teachers do subscribe to the basic ideas expressed in this paper, many adaptations of writing projects can be devised that suit their own contextual constraints and purposes.

If teachers decide to design a product-oriented writing project for themselves or their students, tenacity and a sense of vision are required to see it through to the end. This tenacity emerges from a deep commitment to the value of a writing project and from a certain amount of intellectual and physical energy, which not all of us have on a consistent basis. Lacking these, teachers can still commit to a product-oriented vision even for the daily or weekly writing activities they may do with

students, and for the daily and weekly jottings and journal writings they may do for themselves. The point is to visualize an end, then figure out how to get there. This means projecting how the daily and weekly efforts—the accumulation of small pieces—can ultimately fit together for a larger purpose, one that includes the gratifying experience of sharing the results of these efforts with a public readership.

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