Exploring Through Writing

A Process Approach to ESL Composition

Second Edition
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A Process Approach to ESL Composition

ANN RAIMES

Hunter College
To JAMES RAIMES
with love and gratitude, again

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Preface: To the Instructor

Writing well, whether in a first or a second language, is a process that can be learned and practiced. Unfortunately, good writing doesn't just happen. Most writers, whether they are writing in their native language or not, have to write draft after draft, first to generate and organize their ideas and then to convey those ideas clearly to readers.

Taking time over writing; doing a lot of reading, thinking, talking, and writing about a subject; trying out options; and rewriting—none of these are punishments for poor and unskilled writers. Rather, these activities are an absolutely essential part of the writing process. For second-language students, these activities are especially valuable, as they provide many opportunities for communication in the new language. Exploring Through Writing: A Process Approach to ESL Composition, second edition, will ask your students to read, think, talk, and write in English. It will lead them through the process of writing, providing three things that all writers—including professional writers, businesspeople, and student writers—need to improve their writing in an academic setting: time, familiarity with the options available to them, and a lot of advice and support from readers, including skilled advice from a teacher.

In addition to giving students the opportunity to explore topics by writing about them, the book emphasizes the specific rhetorical and linguistic needs of second-language writers; that is, it addresses the commonly accepted forms of written English and its syntactic and grammatical conventions. These needs are addressed as individual parts of the writing process. Writing is such a complex process that if we teachers try to concentrate on everything at once, we will surely run into trouble. Student writers, particularly those who are writing in a new language, can benefit from approaching the task of writing in a systematic way.

The Instructor's Manual that accompanies this book provides an explanation of the rationale for the approach, specific guidelines for the activities in each chapter, and detailed recommendations on how to organize a course, adapt activities, use groups, respond to students' writing, and provide further reading and writing tasks.

The Organization of the Book

Building on the strength of the first edition, the second edition retains the three-part format, focusing on the processes involved in writing an essay, source materials for additional essay subjects, and editing strategies.
PREFACE: TO THE INSTRUCTOR

Level and Flexibility

This second edition of Exploring Through Writing: A Process Approach to ESL Composition is designed for intermediate- to advanced-level students in academic programs or in intensive English language institutes. Since so many ESL and EFL classes contain students of mixed levels (and since heterogeneous classes are becoming more common as budgets shrink and institutions consolidate their resources), this edition has been designed to accommodate a number of levels. The language of the text is accessible and appropriate for intermediate-level students. Many of the readings are appropriate for intermediate students and any difficult vocabulary is glossed. In addition, some grammar exercises have been included especially to provide a suitable review for the few students who, even in advanced classes, seem to have difficulties with relatively simple grammatical points. Instructors with advanced students will find their needs addressed, too: The language of the text itself is clear and free from jargon, thus making it appropriate for advanced as well as intermediate students; many of the grammar exercises are challenging; and while all the readings are authentic and unadapted, some are selections from academic, discipline-specific books and articles that have been included with advanced students in mind.

Flexibility of level is accompanied by flexibility of approach. Depending upon institutional demands and student needs, the pictures and readings in the book can be used for general or academic writing tasks. In addition, the design of the book recognizes that instructors have different approaches to the teaching of grammar in relation to composition. With editing troublesots and exercises included as a separate section, instructors have the flexibility of including as little or as much work on grammar as they want, when and where it is needed.

Part I, Processes

Part I leads students through the processes of writing a polished paper. Four sections of three short chapters provide a manageable approach to writing an essay without ignoring the complexity of the process or reducing it to a simplistic set of prescriptive steps.

- Getting Started
  Students get started with writing an essay by exploring the different ways of beginning this process. Students begin the process by searching their memory and then discussing and writing about four pictures and five readings on the subject of people and places; this is followed up with brainstorming and freewriting. The techniques they practice here can then be used with other subject materials contained in Part II.

- Finding Ways In
  Then, by using techniques of applying systematic approaches, reading, observing and imitating other writers, and gradually establishing a focus, the students find ways in to approaching a piece of writing.
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• Writing and Revising
  The third section focuses on planning and writing both a first and a second draft, with a careful examination of the first draft providing the impetus for revision.
• Editing
  Students examine their own text with care to improve style and diction and to correct errors. They then prepare the final copy and proofread.

Part II, Materials: Pictures and Readings

Part II provides materials for writing on five new subject areas, in order for students to practice—in new contexts—the processes and strategies introduced in Part I. Each section contains “Search Your Memory” questions, four pictures, and five glossed readings. The sections and pictures, and the readings within them, are self-contained and can be used selectively in any sequence, thus providing additional flexibility for the instructor and the students. The readings range from fiction and journalism to journal articles in specific academic fields. The five subject areas are:

  Culture and Society
  Work
  Family
  Men and Women
  Planet Earth

Each section ends with a list of suggested topics for writing.

Part III, Editing: Twenty-one Troublespots

Part III is a handbook that students can consult as they write essays generated from the materials in Parts I and II. It provides review and editing advice for the sentence-level problems that frequently trouble ESL writers. Specific flowcharts in the form of yes/no questions for each troublespot direct students to examine closely their own writing when checking for errors. Grammar is presented as something that gives students the tools for editing.

The Second Edition

In response to questionnaire answers from instructors, the three sections of the book have been retained. Revisions have focused mainly on organization, on variety of materials, and on increasing the opportunities for academic writing. The major revisions in the second edition have been the following:
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• General organization: “Editing: Twenty-one Troublespots” now comes last, so it can more easily be used as a reference handbook as students work on essays developed from materials in Parts I and II.

• Part I, Processes, has been cut and simplified, and materials for a specific writing task on the subject of people and places have been integrated into it. Instructors will find it easy to use only parts of chapters or even to omit chapters if time constraints demand. The “Processes” section now refers frequently to the demands of academic assignments and leads students into library research.

• The readings in Part II include more articles of an academic nature; new sections, “Culture and Society” and “Planet Earth,” have also been included. Each section in Part II now includes the same number of pictures and readings: four and five, respectively.

• The Troublespots have been revised, with explanations and exercises listed separately. Some of the easier sections have been consolidated to make room for new troublespots:

  Punctuation
  Verb Tenses: Present-Future
  Verb Tenses: Past
  Modal Auxiliaries
  Prepositions and Phrasal Verbs

• Four appendixes have been included:

  Writing a Research Paper
  Writing Essay Examinations
  Spelling
  Irregular Verbs

Acknowledgments

A lot of people were a great help to me as I wrote this second edition of Exploring Through Writing. I was constantly inspired by my students in ESL writing classes in the Developmental English Program at Hunter College. They gave me feedback on materials and activities and contributed samples of their writing to this book. I am grateful to them for their interest and involvement. The following reviewers responded to my manuscript drafts with great care and offered valuable advice: Alexandra Rowe Henry, University of South Carolina; Sandra M. Arfa, University of Wisconsin; Phyllis L. Lim, University of Arizona; Mary Newton Bruder, Chatham College; Joaquim Mendez, New York Institute of Technology; Cynthia J. Chapel, University of Central Oklahoma; Patricia Donaher, University of Nebraska–Lincoln; and Connie Perdreau, Ohio University. My thanks to
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Ann Raimes
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