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Annotated Bibliography of Research on Writing in a Non-Native Language:
Part II

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PREFACE

This annotated bibliography of research in second language writing is intended to update and supplement Sandra R. Schecter and Linda A. Harklau’s *Annotated Bibliography of Research on Writing in a Non-Native Language*, published in 1992, as Technical Report No. 51, by the National Center for the Study of Writing. The present bibliography follows the categorization scheme established in the 1992 publication. That is, it groups references under the following categories:

1.0 TEXT FEATURES

1.1 Error Analysis of Syntax and Mechanics: References in this category focus on errors in non-native writers’ texts. These include morphological, grammatical, and lexical errors.

1.2 Discourse Features: These references include studies of the organization, structure, content, and stylistic features of non-native writers’ texts. Some studies contrast L2 writers’ text features with those of L1 writers.

2.0 NON-NATIVE WRITING PROFICIENCY DEVELOPMENT

2.1 Bilingual Emergent Literacy: This study considers the development of literacy in young bilingual children.

2.2 Later Elementary and Secondary: This study focuses on literacy development of slightly older bilingual children.

2.3 Literate Adults: This category addresses the developing proficiency of L2 writers at university level.

3.0 WRITING PROCESS

3.1 Relationship to attitude: No references were found in the search undertaken for this updated bibliography.

3.2 Revision: This study considers the revision processes and difficulties of L2 writers.

3.3 Effect of Task and Other Variables: These studies focus on the effect of various task types on the written products and on the processes. Note that the Schecter and Harklau bibliography included computer-assisted instruction in this category. However, since there have been many entries in this area since 1992, the present bibliography groups these references in a separate category, 5.5.

4.0 NON-NATIVE WRITING AND OTHER LANGUAGE SKILLS

4.1 Reading/Writing Relationship: No references were found in the search undertaken for this updated bibliography.

4.2 Speaking/Writing Relationship: These studies investigate the correlation between oral proficiency in L1 and L2 writing skills.

5.0 INSTRUCTIONAL FACTORS

5.1 Curriculum and Program: References in this group examine the effect of particular instructional practices and contexts in the development of L2 writing skills. Also considered are the effects of program settings.

5.2 Teacher Response: These studies consider the effect of teacher response on L2 writers and writing. Note that the Schecter and Harklau bibliography titled this category “Response to Writing” and included within it studies of writers’ own responses and peer response. The present bibliography groups these latter studies separately, in 5.3.

5.3 Writer Response, Peer Response: This category includes studies of writers’ responses to their teachers’ comments, as well as peers’ responses.

5.4 Assessment: This category was added to the classification scheme to include studies which address general issues of assessing L2 writing.
5.5 **Computer-Assisted Instruction**: This category was added to include the large number of studies on the efficacy of CAI on L2 writers and writing.

Sources consulted in the compilation of this bibliography are as follows:


Dissertation Abstracts International
ERIC Documents
*Journal of Educational Computing Research*
*Journal of Second Language Writing*
*TESOL Quarterly*
*TESL Canada Journal*
*Writing Center Journal*
*Written Communication*


*ELT Journal*
*System*
1.0 TEXT FEATURES

1.1 Error Analysis of Syntax and Mechanics


Studies the misuse, and, particularly overuse, of logical connectives in undergraduate writing.


Studies 160 texts by L2 writers (placement essays): identifies 62 quantitative, lexical and syntactic features, from which 28 text variables are extracted. High frequency use of these variables correlates positively with overall writing proficiency as measured by holistic scores.

1.2 Discourse Features


Analyzes organizational cohesion devices in the English essays of 6 native English speakers and 6 native Cantonese speakers (6th Form). Finds that the Cantonese speakers use a higher frequency of these devices, and that the two groups differ in the choice and placement of cohesive devices.


Examines peer reviews of 35 L2 women students to see if any differences exist between the complimenting strategies they use when addressing male and female classmates. Strategies studied include positive evaluation, intensifiers, personal referencing and framing. Finds that this group, in contrast to a group of L1 writers, did not vary their complimenting strategies with the sex of the addressee.


Examines cohesion in expository essays in Malay and English written by native speakers of each language, as well as essays written by Malay ESL students. Finds no difference in the amount of cohesive devices, but does find differences in the type of devices used.


Analyzes the use by students of English-for-Science-and-Engineering of certain categories of nouns in their texts. Finds that both “sub-technical” and “text-structuring” words were used to fulfill referential and discourse-oriented functions.

Investigates the influences of L1 literacy skills and L2 oral proficiency on L2 writing. Finds strong correlation between L2 oral proficiency and L2 writing, but not between L1 literacy and L2 writing.


Compares the use of politeness strategies used in business letters written by native English speakers and by nonnative English speakers. Finds that the strategies used by nonnative English speakers are less formal and more direct.


This contrastive rhetoric study of 768 essays in English by Arabic, Chinese, Spanish, and English native speakers attempts to ascertain whether there are “distinctive, quantifiable” differences in the texts produced by the 4 groups. (The Writers’ Workbench software program was used.)


Studies 51 scholarly papers by L2 writers of medical English to identify the communicative functions fulfilled through the use of 17 grammatical variables (e.g. verb tense, voice and form). Develops 3 axes of distribution of variables that correlate with the genres of case reports, editorials and research papers.


Discusses Kalplan’s (and others) research on contrastive rhetoric in light of the organizational patterns that Taiwanese, Hong Kong, and People’s Republic of China students report using, as well ad three groups’ histories of writing instruction.

**2.0 NON-NATIVE WRITING PROFICIENCY DEVELOPMENT**

**2.1 Bilingual Emergent Literacy**


Examines the writing of kindergarten children in an ESL program, as well as the instructional practices of their teachers. Findings indicate support for writing instruction at the kindergarten level for ESL students.

**2.2 Later Elementary and Secondary**

Follows the dialogue journal writing of nine students for three years, beginning in the 5th grade. Three students were instructed in English only, six in bilingual classes (three early exit, three late exit). Finds growth in all students’ writing proficiency, but greatest progress for the late-exit bilingual students.

2.3 Literate Adults


Studies Southeast Asian-American immigrants and shows that English writing skills for mainstreamed students are the same at the 8th, 10th, and 12th grade levels and are the same as nonnarrative university students. Results suggest that age on arrival is a more important factor than the number of years in the U.S.


Compares the writing products and skill development of Spanish language learners with the assumptions of foreign language teaching faculty about the development of writing skills. Calls for more attention to writing instruction in foreign language classes.
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3.0 WRITING PROCESS

3.2 Revision


Studies the revision of Chinese graduate students. Finds limited ability to detect, diagnose and fix errors. Finds also that problems in organization and usage are addressed ineffectively.

3.3 Effect of Task and Other Variables


Studies the composing practices of Chinese ESL postgraduate students as they write academic texts in both English and Chinese. Finds much variation in the writers’ approach to the task, as well as a limited understanding of the nature of the task.


Studies the effects of various tasks and interaction structures of L2 writers with classmates and with teachers on the reduction of writers’ apprehension and the increase of proficiency.


Uses think-aloud protocols to examine the metacognitive processes of 8 nonnative speakers of English as they complete two writing tasks. Finds that students whose comments indicate concern for content and organization receive higher scores on their papers than do students whose comments include frequent rereadings.


Analyzes think-aloud protocols used by advanced L2 writing students in sentence completion tasks. Finds that the students restate content, construct meaning, engage in higher- and lower-order planning, and evaluate the appropriateness of particular constructions. However, students do not evidence attention to issues of cohesion in their think-alouds.


Studies the effect of the task on the quality and length of compositions written by American, English-speaking students of Japanese. Finds that descriptive and narrative tasks pose different linguistic demands and that the ability to expand and elaborate subtopics accounts for most differences in scores.

Considers the use of diaries and critical dialogue in the language learning process and development of 5 immigrant women. Identifies the construct of social identity as critical to the women’s adaptation process. Argues for the importance of diary-keeping in promoting the women’s critical reflection as they negotiate their identities.


Studies the relationship between process skills and product quality for students writing in Japanese as an additional language. (Their first language is either English or Chinese.) Finds no clear relationship between process skills and resulting product.


Studies high school ESL students’ responses to picture prompts. Finds that the more skilled writers evidence less dependence on the actual content of the picture:

4.0 NON-NATIVE WRITING AND OTHER LANGUAGE SKILLS

4.2 Speaking/Writing Relationship


Compares two ESP classes for Egyptian economists with a view to the development of writing proficiency. One class is structured around conversation and extensive writing, while the other relies on developing listening and reading skills. Finds that the listening-reading class has greater gains in writing proficiency.


Explores the role of speaking in university-level ESL composition classes. A study of the instructional discourse in 5 classes finds that very little of the classroom talk develops into either the invention or development of topic. Nor does classroom talk result in oral rehearsal of potential texts.

5.0 INSTRUCTIONAL FACTORS

5.1 Curriculum and Program


This case study of the common instructional routines used by three experienced composition teachers finds that six routines account for all teaching practices. Finds, also that these teachers’ instruction systematically focuses on student task performance, rather than on presentation of content.


Investigates the effects of explicit instruction on the rhetorical functions of generalization and classification. Finds that explicit instruction has a beneficial effect on the foreign language writing proficiency of a group of university-level Farsi speakers.

5.2 Teacher Response

Studies peer-response activities in L2 writing classes to discover (1) whether students give good advice to their peers, and (2) what differences there are between peers’ comments and teachers’ comments. Finds that teachers’ and peers’ comments served useful, complementary purposes.


Studies 39 ESL students and 13 ESL teachers in college composition classes to review Newkirk’s (1984) findings regarding the differences between teachers’ and peers’ evaluations of student texts. Finds that the role and function of teachers and students differs markedly in evaluation tasks.


Studies the effectiveness of various teacher cues in helping Japanese EFL students correct their own errors in written compositions.


Compares the responses of native-English-speaking ESL teachers with nonnative ESL teachers (Indian) to ESL college students’ writing. Finds that while the two groups of teachers differ in their perception of error gravity, both rate errors such as verb tense, subject-verb agreement, and question structures as most serious.


Compares the effect of two different ways of responding to student essays (holistic feedback on meaning, and discrete-item attention to form) on a linguistically diverse group of college freshmen. Finds that holistic response is more likely to result in improvements in grammatical accuracy.

### 5.3 Writer Response, Peer Response


See 5.2, above.


Describes a FL composition course that uses peer group teaching techniques at both prewriting and revision stages:


See 5.2, above.

Examines students’ level of control over interactions in student-teacher writing conferences. Considers students’ level of participation and clarification requests. Also assesses how students deal with the revisions discussed in the conferences and the role of negotiation in a successful conference.


Describes students’ and teachers’ initial reactions to working in peer feedback groups in an FL composition course. Suggests strategies for making peer feedback teams function more effectively.


Finds a low level of “miscorrection” in group writing activities. This suggests that peer feedback can play a role in the development of writing ability.


Supports peer evaluation sessions as effective in ESL classrooms, and makes suggestions for more effective organization of groups.


Examines two aspects of writing groups: the task dimension and the social dimension. Finds that, largely, students stayed on task by discussing each other’s texts. However, also found nonconstructive and sharply critical interactions among group members. Casts doubt on the benefit of writing groups.


Surveys 3 ESL writing teachers and 39 of their students as to their feedback preferences. Finds that the students prefer teacher feedback over non-teacher feedback, and that the teachers prefer, and use, non-teacher feedback frequently.


Surveys ESL students as to their preferences for feedback type on their written work. Identifies three categories of students: receptors (46%), semi-resistors (41%), resistors (13%). As students progress in their English language development they became less tolerant of their teachers’ feedback roles.


Describes criteria used by NNS children in grades 2-6 when evaluating writing. Shows that the students are critical evaluators, and that they focus on meaning regardless of age and author. Also, the students are influenced in their evaluations by the pedagogical focus of their ESL classes.

Compares the peer evaluation group interactions in two college-level writing classes, one using the standard practice of modeling expected peer group behaviors, the other class using a lengthy preparation for peer group work that included discovering “rules” for effective response. Finds that the group given lengthy preparation demonstrates more engagement in the task, more productive communication about writing, and gives clearer guidelines for revision.

5.4 Assessment


Studies native-English-speaking ESL teachers’ assessment of L2 writing samples using a scoring technique based on the “ESL Composition Profile” (Jacobs, et al.). Finds that the category for vocabulary produces the most variance in total scores. In descending order the other categories are content, language use, organization, and mechanics.


Finds no significant difference in the scores for timed and untimed essays written by ESL students. Calls for further research regarding different time limits, writers’ educational backgrounds, communicative aims, composition length, etc.


Studies students’ pattern of question choice and writing performance on writing competence test. Finds that students favored first and second questions in 4-question sets.


Compares the performance of German’ L1 students on an English writing task and their teachers’ assessment of the text with the performance and assessment of native-English-speaking students on the same task. Questions the role of usage in teacher assessments.


Finds that experts agree about the level of difficulty of writing prompts and prompt task type, but that they cannot successfully predict which prompts will result in high or low scores for L2 writers.


Surveys faculty response to 24 sentences containing errors commonly produced by NNS writers. Analysis of the 6-point scale of tolerance completed by faculty members shows them to be more tolerant of NNS errors than of errors perceived to have been made by native speakers. This suggests that faculty members may use a more lenient standard when evaluating the writing of NNS writers.


Considers the case of a Vietnamese L1 student in ESL class and his performance on a writing competency exam that assesses content, rhetorical organization and preparation. Raises concerns about the purposes, development, and evaluation of writing assessment instruments.

Studies the responses of 269 native English speakers and native Japanese speakers of English (from professional, graduate and undergraduate backgrounds) to ESL compositions written by Japanese college students. Aspects considered important by the readers include grammar, clarity of meaning, naturalness, naturalness, and organization.


ESL Students are found to be twice as likely to fail an institutional exit exam (although these students frequently do pass on appeal) Suggests portfolio assessment as a more valid assessment tool for L2 writers.


Studies the ratings ‘given to ESL university-level essays by experienced racers untrained in ESL methodology. Finds that these raters placed far more emphasis on the sentence-level features than on rhetorical features.

5.5 Computer-Assisted Instruction


Examines second-language classroom applications of computerized text analysis by ESL writers, suggesting that the Grammatik III disk-based analyzer may not be a suitable addition to an ESL composition curriculum.


A comparison of the efficacy of three popular computer programs as to the analysis of texts written by ESL students. Results indicate occasional incorrect advice and emphasis on relatively trivial issues, raising doubts about their effectiveness as a stand-alone revision aid for ESL writers.


Observation of ESL students’ small group writing activities involving a word processor finds the word processor to be a valuable tool in promoting writing abilities.


Discusses the use of computers with ESL students, and focuses on a pilot program that includes word processing in ESL writing classes. The program uses “student computer experts” as peer tutors to introduce word processing.


Uses data from a large L2 corpus (160 texts, 62 variables) and demonstrates that a computer program designed for first-language texts is not accurate enough to capture completely the structures used by L2 writers. Suggestions are offered for an L2 text analysis program.

Reviews specific word processing programs to teach ESL composition strategies. Discusses advantages and drawbacks of such features as spell checkers, prompting markers, and formatting programs. Suggestions are presented for enhancing students’ writing skills.


Explores the benefits and drawbacks of ESL student writers’ composing with word processors.


Advises against the use of text analysis programs marketed as grammar checkers and style analyzers that provide students with “canned” feedback. Argues that the feedback does not offer effective instruction, particularly to non-proficient writers. Alternative approaches for giving feedback in the electronic medium are offered.


Studies the writing development of six deaf students using Electronic Networks for Interact, an interactive computer networking system that enables classwork or group discussions to be conducted on-screen. Finds a positive effect on students.


Studies the effect of using computers for composing in terms of the writing quality and self-esteem of beginning ESL students. Finds positive effects for writing quality, but not for self-esteem.


Compares two groups, one writing e-mail dialog journals, and the other using pen and paper. Finds that the e-mail group writes more and receives longer responses.
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