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Guidelines: A Cross-Cultural Reading/Writing Text.
Ruth Spack. New York: St. Martin's, 1990. vii-338 pp.

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Recent research in the fields of first and second language composition has increased our understanding of the kind of activity writing is. Hayes & Flower (1980, 1987), for example, using think-aloud protocol analysis of both skilled and unskilled writers at work, have found that first-language composing is a recursive, goal-oriented activity consisting of three major processes: planning, sentence generation, and revising, all of which occur in free variation throughout the production of a written text. Similarly, investigations of the composing behaviors of L2 writers (Jones & Tetroe, 1984; Raimes, 1987; Cumming, 1988) have paid particular attention to the interaction between writing skill and second language proficiency. While neither the relative weight of linguistic factors and writing ability nor their interaction with other variables (e.g., language background, length of residence in the L2 environment, age, and education) has been precisely determined,

one finding has clearly emerged: second language writers engage in writing processes similar to those of L1 writers.

In spite of this illuminating research, however, its findings have only just begun to make their way into second language writing classrooms where the traditional product-oriented model of composition instruction still prevails (Zamel, 1987) whose hallmark is a focus on "discrete steps and prescriptive principles that students are exhorted to follow in order to learn to write well" (Zamel, 1987, p. 701). There seem to be two reasons why practice has lagged significantly behind theory in the ESL classroom. First, ESL writing instructors view themselves primarily as language teachers and thus are preoccupied with sentence-level grammar and the reproduction of paradigms for particular types of paragraphs and essays. The second reason stems from the difficulty of capturing the complexity, recursivity, and individuality of the writing process on paper, an issue which Rose (1983) has raised. As he puts it, "Human beings simply don't internalize a complex process identically . . . [B]y their very nature, texts can perhaps present a method, but they cannot represent all the possible ways each one of us makes that method work" (Rose, 1983, p. 208)

Guidelines: A Cross-Cultural Reading/Writing Text, written by Ruth Spack for advanced university ESL students, is one of the first ESL composition texts which attempts to make the writing process accessible to student writers via what Rose (1983) calls "the textbook's static page." While this text does not completely overcome the limitations that Rose recognizes, it nevertheless acknowledges the complexity and recursivity of the writing process and breaks down each phase of the process into manageable strategies for pre-writing, composing, and revising.

The book consists of four sections each of which successively focuses on a more academic and less personal writing assignment: the first assignment is an essay based on personal experience; the second is a personal response to a text; the third requires the writer to construct an argument; the fourth is a research paper for which outside sources must be consulted. The topics for the second and third writing assignments are defined for the student by a number of accompanying reading selections drawn from various cultural contexts.

Each assignment is divided into activities which take the student through the entire writing process for the particular paper. The most extensive and well-grounded of these are the pre-writing activities of which there are two types. The first includes various

reading comprehension and response tasks which emphasize the central place of critical reading in academic writing, such as making entries in a reading journal before and after reading, annotation of a given passage, and conventional comprehension questions. The second type of pre-writing activity forces students to experiment with various idea-generation heuristics to help them develop content for their papers. The tasks suggested for this purpose include well-known freewriting and listing tasks, but Spack also presents a lesser-known activity called "cubing" which is a more analytical idea-generation technique that requires students to view a topic from six different perspectives.

The assignments are also accompanied by "strategies" for organizing each essay. Unlike the prescriptive, textbook-writer-produced models found in most ESL composition texts, the organizational strategies laid out by Spack offer more freedom and a greater number of options which an individual writer can suit to his or her content and purpose. The flexibility built into each lesson is balanced by the repetition of certain of these organizational techniques throughout the book. Such reinforcement of procedure can fruitfully be applied to academic writing tasks since by recycling the various organizational options for each assignment, it is likely that these patterns will become an automatic part of the student's composition repertoire. Spack's awareness of the need to develop automatic organizational skills reflects an understanding of the competence that Purves & Purves (1986) insist is essential for reducing the cognitive demand of the writing process.

Spack's text also gives prominence to revision which process studies have shown to be a central activity for all skilled writers. But global revision, which skilled writers are known to concentrate on, is not usually a focus for ESL teachers who are easily distracted by sentence-level problems when evaluating student compositions. Indeed, a concern for local revision over global revision can lead teachers to inadvertently appropriate a student's text by changing its meaning in order to achieve sentence-level accuracy (Zamel, 1985). And if teachers focus on local problems, students do too. To counteract ESL concern with local revision, Spack gives students specific instruction, in line with more current wisdom, in how to revise at the global level for content, organization, and coherence problems by making use of peer review and self-evaluation.

Peer review is introduced through a brief lesson on giving criticism, which is subsequently incorporated into a suggested peer

review form. Although the form is quite general for the first assignment, it is made more task-specific by the addition of a list of questions pertinent to each of the remaining assignments. For the companion activity of self-evaluation, Spack provides lists of questions which the student can use to self-evaluate his/her own draft from many different angles. This multi-faceted approach to reviewing one's draft is designed to help a student see where the written text fails to match his/her intentions and is in line with Witte (1985) who argues that the recognition of dissonance between the intended and received meanings is the first step to effective revision.

Beyond peer review and self-evaluation, however, the book provides directives for global revision activities such as deletion, addition, change, and rearrangement, all of which correspond to those operations which researchers have found are used by skilled writers (Matsuhashi & Gordon, 1985; Hall, 1990). However, while theoretically sound, these operations require a maturity that few student writers have, and thus they will probably prove useful only with significant mediation by the teacher.

One possible weakness of a book like *Guidelines* is the decision to center an entire academic writing course on the writing process, emphasizing drafting and the use of writing to discover meaning rather than to emulate and understand the variety of possible academic text models. Horowitz (1986a) has indicted the "process school" for failing to prepare students to meet academic writing demands. Taking the timed essay examination as an example, he points out that certain kinds of academic writing are routinized and do not require the multi-draft, exploratory techniques presented in process approach textbooks. Indeed, academic writing tasks that seem not to require the full-blown writing process have been detailed in various surveys (Bridgeman & Carlson, 1984; Horowitz, 1986b). According to these studies, such writing routines include laboratory reports, case studies, summary and analysis of assigned readings, annotated bibliography, and library research papers synthesizing multiple sources.

What Spack's book ignores, then, is the conventional and formulaic nature of many academic writing tasks. In contrast, researchers are beginning to apply text and genre analysis in an attempt to cull "teachable" rhetorical and linguistic patterns found in well known academic genres (Swales, 1984; Durst, 1987). Such research suggests that much of academic writing is as dependent on prior knowledge of appropriate discourse modes as on writing skill (Purves & Purves, 1986). Unfortunately, the latter seems to be the

sole focus of the process approach, and thus Spack's book does not really address the needs of ESL writers who have had little experience with English discourse modes and actual academic writing practice. While *Guidelines* does provide students with the opportunity to work through assignments that somewhat mirror academic writing tasks, it does not give them the tools to analyze the linguistic and rhetorical features found in academic writing.

In addition to its lack of attention to rhetorical and linguistic patterns found in academic genres, *Guidelines* fails to engage students in reading and writing truly academic discourse. Two of the four writing assignments require the writer to draw on personal experience, a form of content development and interpretation rarely demanded in courses across the tertiary curriculum. And, while the text acknowledges the link between critical reading and academic writing by attaching each writing task to related reading selections, these are largely of the essay or journalistic genre and do not represent the range of academic text types that students actually read and synthesize into their writing. Selections from academic textbooks, data-based research reports, and argumentative essays based on empirical studies are noticeably absent from this text.

These drawbacks notwithstanding, *Guidelines* is the most progressive addition to the collection of ESL composition texts currently on the market. Teachers committed to implementing the latest research findings on the process approach to writing will feel comfortable with its fundamental precepts. However, they will also have to recognize that *Guidelines*, like all current composition textbooks, needs to be adapted for use in an instructional program geared to addressing students' academic writing needs by synthesizing the best of the process approach with the growing body of composition research in text and genre analysis.

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