

**Continuous assessment within the writing
curriculum: A classroom-based study of
an alternative methodology for teaching
writing in a second language context**

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ABSTRACT

The aim of the study was to determine the effects of alternative assessment practices on the writings of seven learners in a Grade 11 English second language class. Conventional assessment practices are inadequate when set against new knowledge of the role played by assessment in supporting learning and teaching. Presently writing and assessment are based on viewing writing as product which is assessed as a single mark of achievement. I set out to develop and implement an alternative writing and assessment programme in the context of typical classroom demands. Alternative practices see writing as process and assessment as embedded in that process. Though alternative assessment practices use a multiplicity of methods, they prefer a criterion based analyses that reflects the developmental aspect of learning to write. Since alternative assessment reflects the developmental aspect of writing, it eschews negative feedback to learners about their writing. The writings of seven learners were analysed to determine if alternative practices had any effect. In addition three reflection questionnaires were administered to gauge the attitude of learners to the alternative programme. My reflections and observations also provided the data for gauging the impact of the programme. Based on the data, the findings and implications of the programme suggest that though there is no conclusive evidence to argue that learners' writing changed as a result of implementing alternative practices, it appeared that learners' attitude to writing became more positive; learners became more confident as a result of having more of an idea of the strengths and weaknesses of their writing; and the classroom climate for learning to write improved. At the same time alternative assessment practices gave the teacher valuable information and an opportunity to reflect critically on improvements for setting criteria; on communicating assessment to learners; on assessment design and strategies; and defining the assessment method best suited to modes of writing discourse.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Assessment practices should not only be...a measure of progress and attainment but also a basis for planning teaching and learning (Cameron and Bygate: 1997).

This study is concerned with the effects of alternative assessment practices on school writing and the attitude to writing of seven learners in a Grade 11 English Second Language class. In the first part of this chapter I look at the evolution of the definition of continuous assessment in other countries and in South Africa. In the second part I critique the educational context that forms the background of this study. The context involves examining how continuous assessment (CA) is presently practised in both the English and writing curriculums. In the last part, I describe the research project by briefly looking at the school, class, and learner contexts of the research as well as the research design of the writing and assessment programme.

1.1 What is Continuous Assessment?

There is no one definition of CA. None of the ones offered below is oppositional: all complement each other in important ways. All of them see CA as a regular event acting in the interests of the learner. Thus, Hlope defines CA as

a formative evaluation procedure, concerned with finding out, in a systematic manner, what a student has gained in terms of knowledge, skills and attitudes after a given set of learning experiences

(1998:6).

In the American model, McTighe and Ferrara see it as the process of gathering and integrating information about learners from various sources to help us understand these students and describe them (1994:1).

Following Hill and Parry (1994), CA in the British model is the involvement of both teacher and student in setting goals for learning and both assess at regular intervals the progress made in achieving these set goals. In this way the learning experiences become an authentic record of what a student can do.

In South Africa CA is also generally seen as a tool that '... describes a wide range of different ways which are (now) used to measure the achievement of learners' (Sieborger: 1998:5); and that it '...takes place on and off throughout a course or period of learning' (p. 25).

The official definition from government has been evolving since 1995 and was finally legislated in December 1998. A few definitions are listed here.

In February 1996 schools were invited to comment on proposals for new assessment practices. One practice strongly suggested was 'Continuous Assessment', with the following motivation:

Assessment has mainly taken the form of formal tests and examinations. The introduction of continuous assessment is an attempt to move away from this narrow notion and to put forward the function of supporting learners first
(Western Cape Education Department: 1996:2).

By June 1997 a more detailed version of CA was presented as

a process of collecting, recording, organising and interpreting a variety of information gained from learners so that informed judgements can be made about their performances, achievements and development needs. Assessment should focus on achievements and performances and is characterised by an absence of competition

(Western Cape Education Department: 1997:2).

Later in September, CA was linked with a learner's progress throughout the year:

Progress - whether the learner will move on to a next level of complexity and extent of learning content - will be determined **continuously** as the educator assesses the learner continuously and formatively. Inability to comply with the required criteria might mean that the learner will need to get extra time or/and extra support

(Western Cape Education Department: 1998:3).

Finally legislated, South Africa's National Policy on Assessment is today defined as

the process of identifying, gathering and interpreting information about a learner's achievement, as measured against nationally agreed outcomes for a particular phase of learning. It involves four steps: generating and collecting evidence of achievement, evaluating this achievement against the outcomes, recording the findings of this evaluation and using this information to assist the learner's development and improve the process of learning and teaching

(Department of Education: 1998:8-9).

The following points can be extracted as recurring assumptions in all these definitions for the practise of CA. Learning is regarded as an ongoing process where

the learner is exposed to a variety of learning experiences for achievement of certain goals. These learning experiences are not confined to tests and examinations only but include a variety of learning opportunities. These opportunities mean that mark giving is not seen as the end of learning. Rather CA should allow for a number of different ways to express learning. Most importantly, CA should be used as a way to gauge what learners know and what they don't know. It is crucial that the information in this regard be used to help the learner move towards the achievement of goals.

Information gauged from CA activities could be used by a teacher to restructure the curriculum or their teaching methodology. All the definitions place learners and their achievements as the central focus for practising CA. The most recently gazetted definition of CA mentions two other important aspects (Dept. of Education: Government Gazette: Volume 402 No. 19640: December 1998). It mentions reporting and recording learning. Learning should be described and reported in such a way that this information is useful to and benefits both the learner as well as the teacher.

1.2 The Current Practice of Assessment

1.2.1 The English curriculum

There are currently two forms of assessment for the English curriculum in our schools: *formative* and *summative*. Some forms of formative assessment are called Continuous Assessment (CA). Teachers are the principals if not the only assessors. Mostly a letter grade or numerical score expresses both forms of assessment.

The activities that make up CA are mostly oral, reading and writing with varying emphasis on all three. There is no general agreement or picture of what CA consists of. Other forms of CA such as projects or tests are also used.

Summative assessment in the form of examinations is usually done towards the end of the second term and again at the end of the final semester in one academic year. The activities that make up summative assessment are generally literature, grammar and writing.

In 1995, the Western Cape Education Department (WCED) presented its official CA document that reflected changes in assessment procedures for Grades 8-11 (WCED: Junior and Senior Secondary Courses: English First and Second Language:

Evaluation. November 1995). This document detailed the mark allocation for examinations and for CA.

In this document the CA mark allocation for both English First (EFL) and English Second Language (ESL) was increased. (All further references will be confined to ESL only.) The ratio suggested for ESL was 60% for formative assessment and 40% for examinations for Grades 8 and 9, while for Grades 10 and 11 the reverse percentage was suggested. Schools were given the liberty to decide on the ratio for CA and examinations themselves. However the suggestion was that schools should move toward increasing their formative evaluation procedures. There were no suggestions of how to practise CA. The CA mark suggested was generally for oral activities.

Presently the interpretation and the practice of CA vary widely between schools, within the same school, between teachers and classes and sometimes between learners in the same class (WCED: English Subject Advisory Newsletter 1:1998).

CA is presently expressed by awarding marks. However with the gradual non-official introduction of practices based on understandings of how the outcomes-based education system will operate, some schools have sought alternative ways of assessing without giving marks.

1.2.2 The writing curriculum

Through the years a number of updated marking grids have made their way to schools. Generally a grid with numeric values is used for grading purposes. The horizontal side of the grid is scaled for CONTENT while the vertical side for LANGUAGE. A composition would be read, judged on these two criteria and a single mark assigned. A mark can be explained by looking at the descriptors in each block of the grid. (See Appendix A for an example of a marking grid.)

Learners would only know their performance by a numerical score, a letter grade or the teacher's comments on their returned writing. It is not common practice for learners to have access to the marking grid, nor to be offered an explanation of why they received these marks or grades.

Writing is graded throughout the year and at some schools is not usually written under examination conditions except for the exit school year. This has been the *modus operandi* for a number of years. The perception was that examinations

compromised the integrity and quality of the learners' written composition. Since writing should be a creative experience, examinations with their rules and restrictions posed a threat to this creativity. Learners needed to be free of the anxiety and fear of getting low marks, of pleasing the teacher, or of trying to complete their writing within a specified time. All these place unnatural pressure on someone trying to write and think creatively.

In the following part, I argue not against the use of CA or point to its shortcomings, but rather reflect on its inappropriate use.

1.3 Limits of Current CA Practices

1.3.1 In the English curriculum

Since the revised version of the introduction of CA in schools in 1995, its practice has mostly been based on tests throughout the academic year. These have all been graded and given either marks or symbols and used to pass or fail learners. In practice, continuous assessment has meant giving tests and examinations together with formal classroom tasks regularly so as to accumulate marks to be used for the overall grading and promotion of learners (Nakabugo: 1998). Black calls this way of practising CA in British schools as '...staccato forms of the old end-of-session examinations. Continuous assessment in action means continual examination for reporting' (1986:10).

Teachers were not given explicit guidance on how to practise CA, and individual schools had to find the best method for themselves. Many teachers interpret CA as meaning awarding marks continuously for ANY activity.

The above point implies that CA is not practised developmentally or systematically. The underlying assumption of CA is that it should reflect growth in the child's learning and should be a diagnostic tool. CA is more often than not mark giving for isolated activities and there is no actual test to see if the child has progressed or mastered a learning opportunity before going on to the next. Because CA is not practised developmentally, the curriculum remains unchanged and teachers continue teaching irrespective of where the learner is, as well as to get through the syllabus.

CA has even been used as an incentive to good behaviour or as a disciplinary tool. These incentives include doing homework, attending classes regularly, good behaviour, or arriving at school on time. This means that CA may not necessarily reflect how much learning has occurred.

CA is used to determine if a learner has passed or failed because the marks are relatively high. The result of this important decision is a driving obsession with marks so that each learner can get the mark for CA before the mid or final academic year when passing or failing is determined.

The English Subject Advisory Service sent a newsletter to teachers in recognition of the inappropriate uses of CA. 'Some teachers still rely on a one-off speech and reading session to get the marks' (WCED: English Subject Advisory Newsletter 1:1997:4). Another consequence of constantly having to award marks is that teachers experiment with activities that are not conducive to mark-giving or activities that are easy to give marks to. This undermines learning. Yet the high status given to awarding marks makes it unlikely that these practices will change.

In order to practise CA developmentally teachers have to keep accurate records to make sure that all learners understood what had to be learned, and to provide remediation. With large classes and limited time the situation is made extremely difficult if not impossible to implement (see Hlope: 1998, for a similar discussion of this problem in Swaziland.)

CA is invisible and learners' achievement a secret from the learner. Learners are often not aware they are being monitored and evaluated for CA marks. Nor do learners have records of their performance. The CA mark is added on to the examination mark for half yearly reports and again at the end of the year. This is part of a larger problem; learners have no control, influence or say in their learning. Learners are not empowered and do not own anything of the learning process.

Generally teachers have had very little training on how to record marks for CA. Recording is usually done on class lists. These lists are the traditional class lists with several narrow columns for teachers to enter marks onto. There is no space to describe learners' growth, strengths or weaknesses on these class lists.

The context in which CA is practised is problematic. At many working class schools there is a high rate of absenteeism and late arrival for classes. If learners are not present to perform at school they cannot be given a mark. Under these

circumstances teachers do more formative evaluation because this at least gives children who were absent another chance at passing.

Added to the contextual problems of implementing CA throughout the year are two summative examinations. Because CA has meant more tests, teachers also have to prepare and mark for half yearly and end of year examinations. This means more marking and an increased workload. Teachers have to teach for CA in the form of small tests because their mark sheets must reflect a CA mark, as well as for summative assessment for passing or failing a grade. Teachers have expressed their frustration at being unable to manage this marking workload. Many teachers have under these circumstances asked for a return to full examinations only and for scrapping CA.

1.3.2 In the writing curriculum

Writing is graded as product only and composition processes such as developing drafts, receiving feedback and making revisions are virtually ignored. Learners are not given any credit for demonstrating steps in their learning and learning to write is not seen as an ongoing event. Only the final product is assessed.

Assessment is reduced to a single score and does not address the complexities of the writing process. This remains hidden with the teacher. Learners do not generally know how they were graded. More often than not the only information learners have are comments and a mark or a letter symbol.

The negative descriptors on the marking grid are contrary to a developmental approach to learning. In the move away from this, the Department of Education sent a document in which it exhorted teachers not only to change their assessment practices but also their attitude. Of the latter the document says among other things that learners have for too long been subjected to:

- sarcasm and humiliation by the kinds of comments written on scripts or given verbally
- inability of educators to give guidance creating a feeling of hopelessness in the learner
- the ranking of their marks classifies the majority of learners as 'average' or 'weak'. Generally classes don't have high numbers of 'excellent' performers. This classification is internalised by learners who then 'teach' themselves to under-perform because that is what is expected of them

(Department of Education: nd:9-10)

Grading is norm-referenced. Learners are graded and judged against each other rather than on individual strengths or weaknesses. The marking grid sets the norm.

Though teachers do have freedom to experiment with methodology for CA, all CA activities are in the end reduced to a mark. This does to an extent limit teachers who want to experiment with different CA activities.

Assessment for the writing curriculum is homogeneous even though learners are required to write different genres. The marking grid is used to grade all writing.

1.4 Research Project

1.4.1 The study context

The School

The school in which I teach serves a working class community and is attended by about 1000 learners (June 1998-1999 statistics). At this school there are several learners who 'hold down night jobs as petrol attendants or labourers...many come from rural areas...or squatter shacks' (Fakier: 1998:52). An article in the Cape Argus highlighted some of the realities that exist at many working class schools under the headline "Absenteeism sparks fears for results". This was its opening paragraph

Township schools in Guguletu, Nyanga, Crossroads, Mitchell's Plain and Manenberg are battling with the problem of teachers and pupils who arrive late for classes, leave early - or never turn up at all.

(Cape Argus, September 29, 1998)

The description of problems in the article fits the school where this research project was carried out. Often these problems presented themselves as obstacles in implementing the programme. For instance it was not possible to complete the programme described in Chapter 3 because on several occasions classes were cancelled for a variety of different reasons. Researchers wanting to conduct research in government schools found 'unexpected and unscheduled changes to the school day', not at all unusual (Vinjevoold and Taylor: 1999:74).

Change carries with it several opportunities as well as hidden threats. The hidden threats can heavily affect a school and make it 'unsettling and unpredictable'

(Fakier: 1998:2). Two kinds of changes had a significant effect on the school during the time of the research for this work: integration and teacher rationalisation.

When schools became more racially integrated after 1994, racial tensions brought with them a host of unsettling and at times debilitating consequences in a number of different ways. Learners had to become sensitive and accepting of change and of others' cultures.

Teacher rationalisation also brought with it complications in the life of the school. For instance a staff of 48 teachers was reduced to 32, (by June 1999) for the same number of learners. There were at least four timetable changes because of teacher loss and this often created major disruptions. Many classes were without teachers until alternative solutions could be found. This often stretched on for weeks at a time. Often classes were without supervision and roamed the school making a considerable amount of noise outside of where teachers were teaching.

Despite these difficulties, there is a core of teachers who are highly motivated to find solutions to problems that block the school's academic progress (Fakier: 1998). This is the school's major strength and it is important to consider the teaching context when reviewing whether this programme can be implemented in another context or not.

I chose my research class as well as the sample group very carefully in the light of these problems. It is a prerequisite of qualitative research that the conditions are created that optimally answer the research question. I chose a class with whom I had good understanding, and where I could, with some certainty, expect co-operation. My study subjects were chosen for similar reasons. The class and the study subjects are discussed below.

The Class

I chose this class for the research for a few reasons. I had been assigned this class and I was interested in the language learning of English Second Language learners. This was an academic class studying subjects such as Physical Science and Mathematics and is traditionally known to be the more 'serious'. I would have expected these learners to attend classes more regularly than the less academic classes. I had been teaching this class for two school terms and had established a rapport with them. This was important as I intended trying out new things and I needed their trust and co-operation. Since this was a qualitative study, study subjects

were deliberately chosen to create the maximum opportunity for the researcher to address the issue she wants to investigate (Allan and Skinner, in Nakabugo: 1998). The initial ten study subjects were also chosen for these reasons.

The Seven Learners

This study initially had ten learners as subjects. However three of the ten learners either dropped out or attended school irregularly. The learners represented a mixed range of language proficiency in English. I wanted an equal mix of boys and girls. Unfortunately the three learners eventually excluded were all boys, so that the criterion for an equal mix of girls and boys was not achieved.

The progress of the seven learners was followed and at times they were given special attention. This was necessary because they were in a class of 45 students and I was interested in testing the effectiveness of the programme. In a real situation, this would be difficult for the teacher. I had initially intended to include only the responses of these seven learners but this was not always possible. This study thus included whole class responses when criteria were devised or when responses were recorded for the reflection questionnaire.

The seven learners were given fictitious names. They were between the ages of 15 and 17. There were 5 girls and 3 boys. All the learners had English as a second language and Afrikaans as their first language. They spoke English with different degrees of confidence and competence, but spoke mostly Afrikaans to their friends and family, though some said they spoke English to brothers and sisters as well as to some of their friends. They almost never spoke English socially except when addressed in that language.

- Karl was a 16 year old boy. He was shy but confident and was popular in his class. He did well in his other subjects and was regarded as 'clever' by his peers.
- Emily was a 17 year old girl and moderately confident. She tended to want to work alone but was very helpful with weak learners. She liked the programme and often asked to continue 'with the work we did yesterday'.
- Candice was a 16 year old girl, who controlled the goings-on in her group despite being withdrawn. She was not particularly confident as an English Second

Language speaker and tended to keep quiet unless specifically asked for her opinion.

- Janice was 15 years old, hardworking and dominated her group when it came to getting things done. She often set the pace and encouraged her group 'to get the work done'. She appeared to like English and was a writer of average ability. She tended not to volunteer her opinion but did speak when specifically asked to do so.
- Hedley was a 16 year old boy. He was extroverted and very enthusiastic throughout the programme. He was usually the one to volunteer information and to raise his hand to answer. He spoke with ease.
- Zena was also 16 years old, more extroverted and also popular with her classmates. She was relatively confident writer and speaker when compared with her peers.
- Lindi was 17 years old, quiet but self-assured. She spoke easily in class and could be extroverted particularly on issues she felt strongly about.

1.4.2 The method

This study took place in a classroom and used a particular method defined as 'exploratory classroom practice' (Allwright: 1993:131). This method uses already familiar pedagogic activities to investigate teacher puzzles.

Allwright (1998) defined the steps of exploratory classroom practice as

1. Decide what is puzzling you and/your learners.
2. Try to reach an understanding of it through thought and discussion.
3. Use your understanding.
4. Find appropriate classroom procedures to help you explore it.
5. Adapt them to the particular puzzle you want to explore.
6. Use the activities in class.
7. Interpret the outcomes.
8. Decide on the implications and plan accordingly

These steps were adjusted slightly for my context and purpose. Each step can be linked to the chapters in this dissertation.

1.4.3 Steps in the research process

Step 1: Identify research question

This study attempted to examine the effects of alternative assessment practices on the writings of seven learners. These alternative practices consisted of providing criteria and of aligning these criteria with assessment. It was hoped that the criteria as well as the assessment criteria would provide information to learners on how to improve their writing. Currently the role of assessment in the writing curriculum is separated from teaching writing. It is usually something to be performed at the end of the writing task. By integrating writing and assessment, and designing alternative assessment practices, the study hoped to document the effect this had on the writing processes of seven learners.

Step 2: Research literature to understand research question

The design of the writing-assessment programme was informed by my theoretical understanding of teaching writing and assessment as well as ten years of teaching English both as first and second languages. The literature indicated that today writing and assessment should not be seen as two distinct practices. Rather there was evidence to suggest that assessment should play an integral role in supporting teaching and learning to write. Nor should assessment be reduced to a single numerical or letter grade. It should reflect the complexity of the writing process. These theoretical understandings focused the research project and informed the design and practice of the writing-assessment programme.

Step 3: Design Material

I designed a writing-assessment programme that would support the implementation of new assessment practices. The material was designed in keeping with classroom pedagogic activities that I was already familiar with. The writing curriculum is part of the English language curriculum and the method used for data collection was intrinsic to the framed research problem and not extrinsic or disconnected from it (Walker: 1990:46).

The writing-assessment programme was divided into two focuses - Focus I: Basic Writing Skills and Focus 2: Genre. Focus I is subdivided into three Learning

Outcomes and Focus 2 into four Learning Areas (LOs). Each LO built on and was an extension of the previous LO. Both the writing design and the assessment strategies were geared for growth and the aim was to develop learners capable of managing their own texts.

Specific assessment tools such as criteria for writing and assessment criteria supported each writing task in each LO. Both these tools formed part of the alternative assessment programme. The criteria for writing defined the skills required for a writing task; while the assessment criteria described the application of these criteria for a specific task (McTighe and Ferrara: 1994:6-7). Each assessment criterion or descriptor had a scale that communicated to learners how well they had performed on each assessment criterion. The scales were numerical as well as qualitative. The qualitative scales were devised so that learners would understand what the numerical values meant. The assessment tools were kept simple at first, increasing in complexity, while at the same time becoming more specific to the writing task as learners progressed with their writing.

The criteria for writing were given to learners at various points in the writing process. Sometimes they were given at the time of writing, and at other times after a first rough draft. The teacher and learners devised these criteria.

However writing was not always assessed with criteria. The programme encouraged a multi-faceted approach to assessing writing. Sometimes assessment had to be both holistic and criterion-based, and at other times assessed only holistically with a letter or numerical scores or comments. The research was carried out in a real classroom and in real time, where the demands of the curriculum sometimes made it difficult to use assessment criteria.

Step 4: Apply material with class

Learners were taken through the writing-assessment programme step by step. Since this programme favoured a process approach, Focus 2 for Genre Writing was dependent on the successful completion of Focus 1 for Basic Writing Skills.

The period of research lasted from July through to November, i.e. a period of 5 months. Learners kept their writings in a folder after they had reflected on the assessment.

At first the writing and the assessment part were taught separately. Later these were integrated and reinforced in a number of different ways: by providing criteria for

writing immediately after a first rough draft, or before a rough draft; by returning learners' writings very soon after assessment; and by doing self and peer assessment immediately after writing. In this way I hoped that writing and assessment would be seen as part of a connected and ongoing process.

Step 5: Data collection and analysis

Data collection began in the third term and ended in the final term of one school year.

This programme concentrated only on one part of the language curriculum, writing. Since the aim of this project was to implement alternative practices and to document their effect on the writings of seven learners, the following sources provided the data for analysis:

- My own daily journal recordings and reflections of writing and assessment.
- Three anonymous Reflection Questionnaires (White: 1994) administered to the whole class (Appendix C).
- Two whole class discussions on the meaning and purpose of assessment.
- Writings of learners.

My daily recording not only provided daily insights of the programme's progression, but also how learners were responding to the programme. I had to be sensitive to learners' feelings and to not overburdening them with too many new things to learn and do all at once. For instance I had to be aware of exactly at which point to introduce criteria, and to gauge when learners were ready for them.

The Reflection Questionnaires were given in the middle, three-quarters of the way through, and at the end of the programme. In this way I hoped that by critical reflection every learner might understand their particular situations and gauge their attitude to the programme (Lather: 1986). The comments quoted throughout this work were taken from the Reflection Questionnaires. They represent the views of the general class and were not confined to the seven study subjects only. Since the whole class was subjected to the programme, it was necessary to give the questionnaires to the entire class.

The whole class discussions were not originally part of the data collection. However this grew from an incident in class during which learners felt that their peers were unfairly assessing them. I tape-recorded the second discussion and learners' comments are interspersed throughout the chapters.

The writings of learners provided the core data. Their writing was assessed in terms of whether they had used the criteria and whether their use had a clear and positive effect.

The detailed assessment criteria could provide learners with information on their writing progress. This enabled me to analyse whether providing more detailed feedback to learners about their writing had any effect or not. Sometimes writing was assessed holistically and at other times the holistic method and the assessment criteria were used simultaneously.

Step 6: Report findings

The aim of this research was to implement an alternative assessment programme and to document its effect on the writings of seven learners. This involved a careful examination of the writings produced by each study subject. In addition to documenting the effects of the alternative assessment programme, learners' attitude to writing after exposure to the alternative assessment programme are also reported here. Though the study does look at whether each of the seven learners' writing improved as a result of using criteria, no claim can be made that learners' writing improved since this was not the intention of the study. Much more in-depth research would have to be performed for clear arrival at such conclusions.

CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL UNDERPINNINGS OF WRITING AND ASSESSMENT

I will consider three approaches to writing: the traditionalist, the process, and the writing assessment parallel approaches. Though there are overlaps each approach is unique in bringing fresh thinking to important aspects of learning to write. For instance the traditionalists emphasised habit and rules. In sharp reaction to this, the process theorists focussed on writing as a variable passage and the child as the creator of texts. The last approach, the writing assessment parallel is a recent addition to the field. While accepting that writing is a passage, it points to the neglect of previous approaches to the role played by assessment in the writing journey. Assessment is seen as an integral aspect of learning to write. Though no formulated theory of assessment exists, research and thinking have so far indicated its dynamic and revolutionary role in the writing process.

In this chapter, I examine the traditional, the process, and the writing assessment parallel approaches to teaching writing respectively.

2.1 Traditional Pedagogies before the 1970s

2.1.1 A brief overview

Before the 1960s teaching writing to ESL learners was not taken seriously (Widdowson: 1992; Silva: 1990). Writing was taught in a systematic, controlled way with strict attention to grammatical correctness and rules. ESL learners had to content themselves with seeking out errors, memorizing endless lists of grammar structures, imitating texts and correcting isolated sentences. Raimes found that the way to teach writing was by

imitation, error-avoidance and control. Writing took the form of sentence drills, fill ins, substitutions, transformations and completions. The content was supplied

(Raimes:1991:177)

Deciding in advance what you wanted to say and fitting this into a preconceived form before starting to write were both strongly recommended. Gurrey (1954) endorsed this approach, but also thought writers should first know and understand what it was they wanted to say before putting it down on paper. He says

It is the teachers' task to ensure that his pupils attend so closely to their subject, and the purpose for which it is written that the development of the theme grows out of those two overriding factors... Thus the determining factor in 'composing' is the way the writer builds up and runs over in his mind before writing.

(Gurrey:1954:178-179)

Not everyone thought this way. Theorists who imagined the possibility that ESL learners could create text themselves were regarded as retrogressive and unenlightened. In 1960, Pincas and others dismissed Erasmus's unorthodox view of 'free composition' as 'naïve' (Silva: 1990:12). Silva quotes the latter as saying

the reverence for original creativeness dies hard. People find it difficult to accept the fact that the use of language is the manipulation of fixed patterns; that these patterns are learned by imitation; and that not until they have been learned can originality occur in the manipulation of patterns or in the choice of variables within patterns

(Silva: 1990:12).

By the later 1960s and early 1970s this rigid and stagnant approach changed slightly. The 'contrastive-rhetoric' approach to writing was the result of the demands of English Second Language students seeking access to tertiary institutions in the USA and the UK. To qualify for entry to tertiary education students had to be able to produce extended written texts. Since extended texts were made up of more than grammatical sentences, students had to learn how paragraphs were formed (Raimes: 1991; Silva: 1990; Widdowson: 1992). Though not discarding the previous strategies of controlled composition, the contrastive-rhetoric approach now

offer[ed] training in recognising and using topic sentences, examples and illustrations. These exercises often stress imitation of paragraph or essay form, using writing from an outline, paragraph completion, identification of topic and support, and scrambled paragraphs to reorder

(Raimes:1991:178)

A logical extension of this was the introduction, body and conclusion of an essay. Writing was taught in a mechanistic way with strict adherence to syntax and grammatical structures. The process remained a 'structural' one where

Language was imagined as a complex of small, easily digestible bits of grammar, which students could master one at a time, adding each new bit to those already under control. Learning to write then consisted of practising bits of language in sentence patterns. Sentences were combined to form paragraphs while striving for grammatical perfection. But students rarely created texts themselves.

(Widdowson:1992:5)

Writing was thus a straightforward method of plan-outline-write or pre-writing-writing and re-writing (Arndt: 1987). Writers should know beforehand what they wanted to say and fit this into a preconceived plan. Both the writer and the writing were subservient to other powers; the writer to the teacher who acted as judge and the writing to grammatical rules and syntax (Silva: 1990; Raimes: 1991; Zamel: 1982).

2.1.2 Criticisms of traditional approaches

In the late 1960s and early 1970s the traditional writing pedagogies of the previous decade came under heavy criticism. The three most pertinent reasons against it were: its overconcern and '...excessive emphasis on form and correctness...' and its inability to account for the '...perceived lack of success in teaching writing in the school or institutional setting' (Arndt: 1987:115) and its neglect of 'meaning-making' (Holbrook: 1967; Whitehead: 1971).

By the late 1970s English Second Language (ESL) teachers began looking at what was happening in English First Language (EFL) classes for guidance on how to teach writing. By this time EFL research into writing processes was underway after the publication of Emig's research into the *Composing Processes of Twelfth Graders* in 1971. This was the 'first major study to respond to the shift in composition orientation from product to process' (Krapels: 1990:38). This landmark study represented the break from traditional methodologies and it was only later in the late 1970s and 1980s that the exploration of process approaches to ESL writing began. (Krapels: 1990; Silva: 1990; Widdowson: 1992). Zamel said of this that '...research into second language composing processes seems to corroborate much of what we have learned from research in first language writing' (in Krapels 1990:39). Zamel further refers to research done by Perl (1980), Rose (1980) and Sommers (1980) that show that writers in the traditional mould pay so much attention to form and structure

that it could become an absorption and acted as a 'block' while it 'closed off avenues to discovering what it is you have to say' (Zamel 1982:199).

In the second half of the 1970s theorists and practitioners were ready to abandon the traditional pedagogies behind teaching writing. But as Silva (1990) points out, there is strong evidence to suggest this model is still very much in use today. The 'back to basics' call in the 1990s in some quarters appeared to be a call for the return to these traditions of uncontextualised grammar teaching.

Thus in the 1970s a new approach, the process approach came to be the new growth to be admired. However even this new growth was not going to be perfect and there were many differences. Despite this there was one thing everyone agreed on. They agreed that the overprotectiveness of the past with its rules and controls should be abandoned. In its place stepped meaning making and the exploration of ideas (Emig: 1971; Poinsoot and Deen: 1991; Raimes: 1991; Smith: 1982; Zamel: 1982;).

The shift in thinking was clear and revolutionary. Technical skills, habit formation, repetitive exercises in grammar, grammatical correctness such as spelling, punctuation and sentence construction moved to the background at the same time as the writer as creator of texts with the freedom to express this, began to predominate. These ideas were considered revolutionary at the time.

The next section looks at two strands of this new humanistic and liberal approach to the teaching of writing; expressive and planned writing. However it would be useful to first discuss how this relatively new approach, the 'process approach' was defined by its proponents.

2.2 A Paradigm Shift: The process approach

2.2.1 An exploratory definition

The process approach is a humanistic approach to writing and moves the writer and the *how* of composing to the forefront. No longer are the concerns with producing error free writing or fitting writing into preconceived forms; the new concerns were about 'creation' and the acceptance of the writing as '...having an integrity of its own' together with its 'liveliness and imagination' and the way the

'pupil ...enjoy[s] the building process'. Grammar would not be taught explicitly but corrected later and individually (Shayer: 1976:164-65).

In other words, the concern moved from an absorption with linguistic structures to the processes involved in composition. This approach stressed writing in its totality and sees that units can be systematically 'taught' through a variety of stimuli. Rohman states that 'writing is usefully described as a process, something which shows continuous change in time like growth in organic nature' (in Emig: 1991:1). Zamel puts it this way: '...writing is a process through which meaning is created' (1982). Correctness could be seen to later when writers have developed enough confidence. Arndt describes this approach as 'evolutionary' in the sense that 'it involves some kind of movement from one stage to the next. Something which did not exist at the outset is produced through a series of operations which involve gradual change' (1987:117). Conner says the process-paradigm '...teaches strategies for invention and discovery; considers audience, purpose, and context of writing' (1987:677). Silva sees the approach as '...a complex, recursive, and creative process or set of behaviours' (1990:15) while Hairston characterised process theory as diverse, flexible, and still emerging (in Silva: 1990). For Raimes '...composing means expressing ideas, conveying meaning. Composing means thinking...' (1983:261). For Raimes a useful question that the writer of this approach could ask is: 'How do I write this? How do I get started' (1983:10), while for Britton, et al, the question to ask is '... to understand how something came to be written not just what is written...' (1975:21).

For White the journey has been more dramatic. The teaching of writing was emerging from its dark period of linguistically naïve correctness into a new era of process-oriented creativity, discovery, and critical thinking' (1994:289).

It appeared then that process theorists concerned themselves with two themes. The one theme was about promoting the individual's unhampered expression of ideas; while the second theme related to the actual path or route the writer used to express this creativity. These two themes are fleshed out further in the discussion that follows.

2.2.2 Expressive writing: exploration, discovery and spontaneity

Holbrook, a harsh critic of traditional pedagogies, challenged teachers to take cognizance of valuable changes and instructed teachers not to fall back on antiquated

methods because this shows 'ignorance'. He was referring to 'rote learning' and ignoring the 'natural', the 'touch', 'intuition' (1967:66-73) and creativity of the child. He sees great value in teaching writing as identity building where the child uses language to build bridges between his unconscious and the outside world. Words are symbols for this 'bridge-building'. Thus for Holbrook 'he need only exercise the natural impulse to find pleasure in the imaginative uses of words' (1967:24-25). Holbrook bemoans the demise of 'voice' from students' writing, 'her own simple sincerity of response' and not the 'mock -scholarly imposition' of response. He further points out that the new approach to language can never be a substitute for the disciplines of approach to meaning in whole terms (1979:10-13). This comment refers to the 1975 'Bullock Report' of the British government in response to declining standards and literacy (Bullock: 1975:1.1-1.2:3-4). The child had to learn explicit rules in the belief that once they have been internalised they would then be applied. Holbrook's (1979) response to this was

We put all kinds of cultural material before a child, and we respond to him in a loving way - but what happens belongs to the 'going concern' inside him. His 'living principle' in dealing with his world, including language use, is an unfathomable mystery, taking its own pace and developing at its own rate...it is self-deceiving to believe we can control rather than foster competence.
(Holbrook: 1979:40-41)

While believing, like Emig, that language develops naturally in the context of an enabling environment and at its own pace, for Holbrook writing is not merely a creative outpouring of ideas. Rather he sees value in 'training'. However the training that Holbrook proposes is not the 'rule-governed' training proposed by the Bullock Report. He means training in 'response to meaning', training the child to recognise and trust their intuitive impulses (1979:31).

A few years later in 1982 Zamel again referred to the resistance of teachers to new approaches. Research challenged these traditional approaches and showed that composing processes involved 'important considerations such as purpose, audience' and a 'continuing attempt to discover what it is one wanted to say'. This discovery involved complex processes such as 'generating, formulating, and refining one's ideas' (1982:195-97). Drafting, pre-writing, writing, and revision are techniques along the way and these stages in the writing process should concentrate on meaning.

Britton speaks of the restrictiveness of rules to 'spontaneous shaping' (1970:16). For him writers craft their writing as they write and would be restricted by

previous planning or by premature rules that impede 'voice', their creativity and the full richness of their experiences. Britton, et al, believe that a child should be encouraged to write expressively. By this they mean that children should be encouraged to use their linguistic resources they have acquired in speech. So that 'what is in our minds becomes words on the page' (1975:19). This forms the basis on which the child operates and shuttles between different modes of writing. So that the expressive serves as a kind of matrix from which other forms such as transactional or poetic modes develop. However since writers also write for a reader they must reshape their writing for this. They would do this as their pool of resources increase. They would learn rules and strategies along the way appropriate to different tasks. Britton (1970) points to the importance of writing for a reader and an audience.

For Dixon too 'learners are born free but are everywhere in chains' (1975:111). Murray also speaks of voice in terms of 'discover[ing] your identity' and says that 'we admire people who are natural, who are themselves, and the best way to know yourself and your own world may be to try and write it down' (1982:7).

Emig (1990) adds her voice to those proposing a more natural, spontaneous approach and says that all that is required is for writers to reflect on their writing and that

once the mind is full of thoughts and the thoughts are fully directed toward some specific goal, the communicator has no more problems: Writing is a swift, full ordered recording.

(Emig: 1990:10)

Another version of process writing was the holistic approach which

assumes that all aspects of the writing process are interdependent; although relevant skills can be identified, none can be taught effectively in isolation.

(Peacock: 1986:19)

Further, this approach contends that students will develop appropriate skills intuitively and incidentally. Peacock (1986) and Kirby, et al, (1988) believe that teaching parts such as word-to-sentence kills any love of writing and that fragmenting writing is destructive to a process approach. Kirby, et al, prefer to work on the whole by planning 'things to say in your head' (1988:3). And then miraculously

you finally catch a hook, take a deep breath, and begin. You rush as hard as you can through the first part until something doesn't work. You hit that blank wall but you'll begin again soon and drive through that first draft

(Kirby, et al: 1988:3).

It would be ideal if children could produce first drafts by biting their pencils, freeing their minds and letting the words flow. Perhaps Kirby, et al, (1988) was referring to English first language speakers who might be more confident and who could more easily be led to explore their first language as spontaneously as he assumes. English second language speakers might not be as confident and would perhaps need more direct intervention strategies of some kind or another before freely exploring the target language.

Kirby, et al, does concede though that we can teach writing. He speaks of 'jotting' and like others of prewriting. This helps with 'brainstorming words and phrases' that are generated 'in no particular order to use in the writing' (1988:21). Zamel (1982) stresses that we need to tell students that they need not necessarily know what they want to say, that they could discover this through the process of writing. Re-writing then becomes an important part of the process and the teacher's role is to guide students through this.

Thus the theoreticians of this era sought expression in the writer's voice and naturalness. Because the focus moved to the writer and their message, the self became important: self-discovery; self-expression and self-growth. Certain favourable conditions that the teacher could nurture had to exist before writing could take place. The context of the words and feelings of the expressivists could be traced to their reaction against the strictures of their predecessors of the sixties.

Other proponents of the process approach saw the value of guidance and intervention. This is examined in the next section.

2.2.3 Planned writing

Planning implies preparation and groundwork before reaching finality. Thornton (1980) and Murray (1982) speak of planning and both endorse Holbrook's (1967) as well as Emig's (1990) views on the naturalness of writing. These writers

speak of writing as a process, one of 'evolving meaning' (Thornton: 1980:18) and of prewriting. Smith (1982) and, Ponsot and Deen (1991) stress the importance of rewriting. The latter authors say that

true writing pleasure waits, for the experienced in rewriting, which calls all their skills into play... by rewriting one can move a certain written piece toward the state in which it is a coherent, expressive whole.

(Ponsot and Deen: 1991:10)

The elements that could combine for composing are flexible. Thornton (1980) warns against presenting these steps in a strict sequence. Emig points out that planning your writing should not be seen as a 'kind of lock step chronological process' (1971:24-25). The writing process does not follow a straight line from which there is no diversion. This would contradict the whole idea of writing being a process. The writer is involved in creating that process and would define it.

For Nightingale (1986) improving writing skills such as prewriting, writing, revising is not necessarily the answer to better writing. Rather, good writing depends on context and knowledge of the subject matter.

Emig speaks of how the process approach is unique in encouraging writing. Writing serves learning because as she explains '...writing as process-and-product possesses a cluster of attributes that correspond uniquely to certain powerful learning strategies' (1990:123). Thus as early as this in her research on examining ESL student writing, Emig (1990) came to these conclusions and spoke about 'writing as process and product'. This idea came to be more in vogue in the mid 1990s and will be explored later.

Emig (1990), like Nightingale (1986), describes stages of the writing process. These are practising writing, revising, and rewriting. She points to the central role played by the teacher in creating a secure environment. This environment should stimulate the child's imagination into writing. Teachers play this central role because one cannot completely rely on natural instincts or intuition. She draws the following conclusions when discussing the importance of writing for learning.

1. Although writing is natural, enabling environments activate it.
2. These environments have the following characteristics: they are safe, structured, private, unobtrusive, and literate.
3. Adults in these environments have two special roles: they are fellow practitioners, and they are providers of possible content, experiences and feedback.
4. Children need frequent opportunities to practise writing, many of these playful.

(Emig: 1990:139)

Emig rescues children from the cold, stiff objectivity of the past as well as the view of them as helpless, immature and undeveloped organisms who do not have complete control over their powers and abilities (Gurrey: 1954). Emig's (1990) adults too are not controlling or the providers of all knowledge. They are fellow practitioners in creating a shared learning context.

In her research on English Second Language students, Zamel (1982) found that when students understood and experienced composing as a process, their writing improved. The consciousness of making errors, and the knowledge of writing as disorderly and haphazard, created confidence in their abilities as learners on a pathway. When rules are imposed and students find these rules difficult to follow they might feel restricted. This was further reinforced by Diaz when she found that ESL students showed a good response to process strategies when in 'a secure, student-centered context' (in Krapels 1990:43). From the research it appears that writing activities with discussion and shared activities can elicit more creative responses than those without. Writing has something to draw on if a writing activity is to be prefaced by talking. It is important that the writing activity be 'probing, exploratory, tentative...' (Dixon: 1975:44)(Heath: 1989).

Process theorists currently believe that there is no one way of teaching writing. Composing depends on a host of factors as well as individual learning styles and behaviours. Arndt demonstrated this with her research. She identified six students with similar academic achievement but who used different composing strategies. She characterised their differences as

- *outliner* allowing the topic to generate ideas
- *reviser* who wrote more or less spontaneously
- *struggler* who found writing a painful and deliberate process
- *thinker* who spent time just thinking about what he wanted to say without a plan or outline
- *planner* who wrote frameworks
- *lister* who wrote ideas arbitrarily

(Arndt:1987:119)

Our learners have made it abundantly clear that different approaches to the best way to teach writing need not be oppositional. It only remains for us to provide situations where learners can express these exciting differences. In this way they can extend themselves without feeling they have to follow conditioned rules for writing. This point has already been made with reference to Zamel's (1982) study.

Furthermore Arndt believes that there is a need to view writing as '...essentially a problem solving undertaking rather than a rule applying exercise or creative accident...' (1987:116). White and Arndt say that it is important to explain to learners that writing is a painfully slow process, one that requires constant practice and repetition. Writing is an extremely demanding activity. Ideas have to 'incubate, sift, and shape' (1994:3; also see Butler and Bentley: 1997). The teacher should be careful not to create boredom with repetition, and needs to maintain the enthusiasm and interest of the writer. Nor should learners be forced to write. This only creates hostility and resentment and the whole point of the process will be defeated. In support of these ideas, Emig (1990) says that writing involves far more complicated dynamics than many researches and practitioners are aware of

composing is anything but a conscious and antiseptically efficient act...writing involves commerce with the unconscious self and that because it does, it is often a sloppy and inefficient procedure for even the most disciplined and writing of professional authors.

(Emig: 1990:48)

In addition to the recommendations by Arndt, the 'composing aloud' writing strategy has been shown to be effective (Chelala in Friedlander: 1990; Pflugstagg in Krapels 1990; Willis: 1996). These researchers reported an improvement in the writing repertoire when ESL learners spoke as they wrote. The audience is the other members in the group who encourage or discourage the generation of words or sentences.

With increased attention being paid to the creative act of meaning making and ideas, a closer look was given to more authentic contexts and purposes so that the social context of writing became more important. Thus tasks that tapped into audience, register, voice and genre slowly began to assume more prominence (Britton: 1970; Emig: 1990; Kress and Knapp: 1992).

By the late 1970s and early 1980s ESL teachers were experimenting with process approaches because it was being seen as '...similar in its broad outlines for first and second language writers' (Silva in Eltic: 1997:216). By the later 1980s the process approach became very popular in many classrooms. However it was still not the perfect method for teaching writing. By the late 1980s the process approach came under criticism from practitioners and theorists, as well as from traditionalists and from the advocates of a genre approach.

2.2.4 Limits of process approaches

The first criticism of process writing was that it ignored the interrelationship between meaning and linguistic forms particularly for ESL. ESL learners did not learn correct grammar usage as a consequence of this de-emphasis. In justification of this criticism educators and parents pointed to low literacy rates and even accused the process method for a decline in reading, writing and speaking standards because of its disregard and consequent neglect of grammar (Widdowson: 1992). There appeared in some quarters a move to return to the recommendations of the Bullock Report (Wyatt-Smith: 1997:10). Kress and Knapp (1992) warn educators to be wise in their call for the re-introduction of grammar teaching. They say that even though their claims of declining linguistic standards might be justified, they would recommend that grammar teaching should not be taught as it had been in the past but that

[it] has to be a kind of grammar, which is able to reveal what language does and what it can be made to do.... The demands of contemporary society are demands for an understanding of how language functions in social and cultural life.

(Kress and Knapp: 1992:11-12)

Willis (1996) points to the difficulty of integrating meaning and linguistic form. Meaning is embedded in the language that we use, in the words we prefer to use and even in the kinds of punctuation that we choose. The important thing is not to 'emphasize form to the detriment of meaning' not to focus on 'meaning and not on form' but rather to strike for a balance between 'form and meaning' (Skehan: 1998:120). Process theorists (White and Arndt: 1994; Skehan: 1998; Willis: 1996) have insisted on the importance of 'product'. They have, however, rejected uncontextualised grammar teaching as they have rejected constant error correction.

The second criticism was that it did not prepare high school learners for the rigours of academic writing (Horowitz: 1986). Writing invites negotiation of meaning with a reader. It is an interpersonal activity. The insistence of the process approach on the self, on personal and narrative writing created the impression that all that was required to write was an unobstructed and creative milieu. The demands and insights for writers required by academia were different. Process teachers did not appreciate this demand for depth and intellectual exigency. Countering this view Katz says that personal writing could form the basis for more demanding writing such as argumentative or critical writing (1995). Perl found that the genre students wrote in

affected their writing. When learners write about personal experiences, writing improved compared with writing that was more objective. Students wrote with '...more fluency and satisfaction...' (in Zamel 1982:197). For Abbs, this does not mean writing in the personal mode is not any less intellectually demanding than other more objective modes. He points to the 'difficult and painful' as well as the 'discipline' required by personal writing (1976:65-66).

The third criticism was that process methods ignored context and the functional nature of language (Wyatt-Smith: 1997:9). Secondary students are required to write a range of text types suited for audience and purpose. This requires access to particular vocabularies and language structures. But the focus of process methods on the personal and the narrative did not adequately prepare learners for writing in different genres. Yet Britton, a process theorist, had referred to the role the teacher played in bringing audience to the attention of the child. He distinguished between writing for different audiences such as 'self, teacher, wider audience (known), and unknown' (1975:116). Process theorists constantly speak of planning. Clearly, though they may believe that writing should be a creative outpouring of ideas, they also believe that the writer, on reflection, should subsequently channel the writing for a particular audience or reader.

The fourth criticism was a direct consequence of the failure to teach writing for different purposes and audiences. The preoccupation of process teachers with individualism and the development of the child's capabilities meant that explicit instruction was checked. This left the teacher deskilled and unconfident (Wyatt-Smith:1997).

The fifth criticism was that it was class biased in favour of middle class child-centered pedagogy. Children from working class homes might confuse the lesser role played by the teacher as loss of control. To classify the responses of working or middle class children in relation to the teacher is only an assumption and a generalisation. Neither of these is necessarily the case. The opposite in fact might also be true. Working class children might greatly enjoy opportunities for steering the lessons themselves. Rather than experiencing this as a loss of control, they might see it as being given responsibility and trust, and so better learn what they had been commissioned to learn.

Other minor criticisms were that process writing's insistence on multiple drafts left learners unprepared for examinations. Most of the research and in particular the

initial research was done in laboratories. This applied particularly to the groundbreaking work of Emig into *The Composing Processes of Twelfth Graders* (1971). Her findings had a major influence on theories of writing. The criticism against her findings was that the composing process' application in real life situations was questionable because her research was carried out under controlled conditions.

Process writing theorists recommend peer evaluation as intrinsic to their practice. But the criticism was that this kind of evaluation was neither reliable nor realistic. Lastly its liberal stance of praise for any writing allowed bad writing to pass as good. Besides being academically unacceptable, this was also personally dishonest.

Anne Raimés offers us good advice for the dilemma of how educators should teach writing. She says there still is competition, discontent and debate when deciding on the best model for teaching writing. While recognising that the writing process and teaching writing is a complex process, teachers should try to '... balance the four elements of form, the writer, content, and the reader' (1991:18). Her reason for these is

our field is too diverse for us to recommend ways of teaching ESL in general. There is no such thing as a generalised ESL student.

(Raimés: 1991:18)

White and Arndt (1994) further elaborate on this view when they say

What is important for us as teachers of writing is to engage our students in that creative process; to excite them about how their texts are coming into being; to give them insights into how they operate as they create their work; to alter their concepts of what writing involves.

(White and Arndt: 1994:5)

The theoretical framework of process writing was further deepened and sharpened by directions in the 1990s with the appearance of the process genre approach.

2.2.5 Process genre

Stratta and Dixon define genre as '..language in context in society' (1992:20). Without going into detail, I shall take the term to distinguish between different types and different kinds of language with special reference to writing. Examples of types are narrative, personal, argumentative or discursive. Examples of different kinds are short stories, drama, novel, friendly letter or the business letter. These text types have

specific audiences and purposes as targets. The register, tone, diction and style of the text reflect the genre

A useful question to ask is if genre theory has anything to offer the secondary school learner if it refers specifically to how language functions in society?' Usually the audience is the teacher and occasionally a peer. But the secondary school learner participates in society and requires a stock of behaviours, speeches and writings to deal with the real world. This does not mean anything formulaic. For instance the learner must learn how to write a letter of application for employment. This requires knowledge of form and register. Teaching genre makes the connection between the confines of the school and the demands of the real world. These demands might be to guide, advise, inform, warn or to entertain. Writing should be directed towards these aims. Whitehead (1971) makes the connection between writing and authentic experiences. Kress, et al, point out that certain types of texts appear many times over and so become conventionalized and accepted as markers of that text. These texts are recognised because people become familiar with their conventions and registers. These social meanings of texts should be taught to secondary school learners (1992).

Research by Fitzgerald showed that learners who composed with the knowledge that they were writing specific types of stories, made an effort in their writing to 'get it right' (1992:32). For her study she asked learners to write fictional stories. By providing them with a range of text types, learners could manipulate characters and situations and in doing so explore the range of text types for the situations they created.

Genre approaches give the teacher a more directional and dominant role to play in bringing specific instruction about different writings to the child. The teacher must make learners aware of texts types and the rules that apply to each since learners cannot discover these on their own. There need not be any contradiction between the more subdued role given to the teacher by process theorists. The emphasis of whether the learner or the teacher should be dominant is more to be found in the classroom context. When learners are less confident, or if the material is complex, or if there is something new to be learnt, then the teacher assumes a dominant role in the beginning. Later, another kind of learning dynamic can be established depending on how learners have progressed. There is always room for a lesson to become dialogic and collaborative. Callaghan and Rothery (1997) say that

[the] role of the teacher is to provide deliberate and focussed input about language, and careful guidance and support in the form of phased instruction or scaffolding. The idea is that the teacher's input becomes reduced over time in relation to increases in student control over the targeted text type.

(Wyatt-Smith: 1997:11)

This appears most suitable for children from disadvantaged backgrounds who do not have access to as 'wide [a] range of text types' in the same way that middle class children do (Wyatt-Smith: 1997:12).

Genre approaches demand careful assessment. Learners must be drawn into the genre writing assessment process in order to understand the criteria. This is further elaborated on in the following section.

2.3 The Middle Ground in the 1990s: The writing assessment parallel

The current tendency is towards principled eclecticism (McLean: 1995).

Eclecticism in the writing context involves process approaches, genre writing, and assessment as a learning tool. It could even mean teaching grammar explicitly and sometimes in a decontextualised way. Moving in and out of all these approaches depend on a host of factors. There need not be any contradiction. Local interventions into teaching writing could use none, some or all of these strategies. Context, learners' needs and individual differences all bring theory and practice into play in the writing journey.

2.3.1 A rationale for change

Global threats to the environment and cross-national health threats on the one hand, and changes in the world's economy, the information revolution, and global influences on the other, are listed as some of the causes for the re-thinking of education and its role in today's world. Torrance (1993) suggests that in the UK education was seen as a way to combat world threats and the move was to look at schools and assess their successes. In this regard analysts found that schools were inadequately preparing the youth for the international changes and threats. The school

curriculum was irrelevant to what was happening in the world. In addition to concerns about the school-work dichotomy, the perception was that there was a decline in educational standards. The quality of teacher education was also criticised for being out of step with the new demands of the modern classroom. It has become imperative for people to know how to access knowledge and to apply it to real life situations and schools were therefore not preparing young people to deal with the world of work. (Gipps: 1994; Hill and Parry: 1994; Puhl: 1997; Wolf: 1994; Torrance: 1995).

The re-thinking of education led analysts to perceive a need for setting goals and examining teaching in relation to these goals. Setting new goals required different ways of examining. The latter needed to be more in line with the goals learners were required to achieve. To demonstrate the richness and complexity that had to be learnt, evaluation had to be '...more generous, more complex, more closely aligned to life...' (Eisner: 1993:224). Learning and assessment are not discrete elements. The rethinking of the curriculum brought into focus the importance of assessing for learning. Our knowledge of how people learn is also changing. The Vygotskian concept of 'scaffolding' of moving from the simple to the complex, is further supplemented by the views of cognitive psychology which suggests that learning is not linear only, but that it proceeds in many directions at once, in a haphazard way and at an uneven pace (Gipps: 1994:27). For example conceptual learning need not be delayed until a particular age or until all the basic facts have been mastered. People of all ability levels constantly use and refine concepts.

The function of assessment has been broadened to include improving and supporting and 'planning teaching and learning' (Cameron and Bygate: 1997:40). Assessment should be able to tell what can be changed or developed and to help make decisions in this regard. Assessment is integrated into the learning programme in the sense that it is something done throughout the learning cycle. It is no longer a single event that happens at the end of an academic year. In this way assessment acts as a catalyst for changing or reforming all aspects of the learning cycle. It should be able to tell teachers about the quality of their teaching as well as of teaching materials they are using.

The changed style and function of assessment means that summative assessment is no longer adequate to deal with the complexities of learning. Formative assessment is ongoing and enables quick changes to be made to all aspects of the teaching and learning cycle. Formative assessment makes diagnostic insights easier

and '...is closely tied to classroom teaching, with assessment tasks built into normal classroom activities' (Cameron and Bygate: 1997:44).

What then does a discussion on teaching writing have to do with assessment? Some of the answers to this question can be found by examining the role that assessment has played in the past, as well as by considering recent developments in assessment design and continuing research in composing processes. Writing has always been assessed, yet its impact on the composing process has been neglected (Huot: 1990). With reference to the role that assessment played in the past Huot maintains that the issue of writing assessment revolved around differences in reviewers ratings of writing (p.237).

Currently theoreticians and practitioners are pointing to the relevance of assessment as an intrinsic part in the writing act. The reconceptualisation of assessment in the 1990s has led to

[a] paradigm shift from psychometrics to a broader model of educational assessment, from a testing and examination culture to an assessment culture. There is a wider range of assessment now than there was twenty-five years ago: teacher assessment, standard tasks, coursework, records of achievement as well as practical and oral assessment, written examination and standardized tests. There is criterion-referenced assessment, formative assessment and performance-based assessment, as well as norm-referenced testing
(Gipps: 1994:1).

However there is still no fully developed theory on assessment (Elbow: 1997; Hamp-Lyons: 1995; Huot: 1996). But Hamp-Lyons points out that there is 'thoughtful research into alternative assessment' with important new talents entering an underexplored field (1995:449). What follows is an overview of current thinking, research and reflections by theorists and practitioners into the growing and exciting field of assessment still in its infancy of discovery and reflection.

2.3.2 Process-assessment

Currently assessment is viewed as a single event and not an ongoing process. This is incompatible with our understanding of how writing develops. Current beliefs are that generally writing is a haphazard act, that it takes place with drafting, prewriting, rewriting, that there are wide individual variations in how this happens. While accepting the latter, theoreticians and practitioners can to an extent define the qualities of good writing. We know more or less how a good composition would

sound (Wiggins: 1994). A supportive relationship should exist between instruction and assessment. Teachers following a process approach to teaching writing allow their students to develop drafts, receive feedback and make revisions as part of the assessment (McTighe and Ferrara: 1994:2). This is not merely a technical argument about how to assess but '...is a theoretical and philosophical argument about what we understand writing to be about and how we believe we read and make meaning' (Hamp-Lyons: 1995:454). We can no longer have product-oriented techniques to assess the achievement of process-oriented writing.

White reports how a discussion of assessing students' essays led to changed teacher practices and a reform in the curriculum. He says '...with newfound confidence in their ability to give consistent and fair grades, they have been able to use evaluation as part of teaching, a great change from the customary empty whining about their responsibility for grading and testing' (1994:282).

New understandings about assessment deepen our theories about how best to teach writing. It goes to the heart of what is good writing, and 'forces us to be specific about what we like and what we don't like in text and why' (Hamp-Lyons: 1995:454). Deciding on how to teach writing directly involves a choice of assessment strategies. The two are linked and can no longer function as discrete variables in this decision. The changing face of assessment as process means examining specific parts of present assessment to see how these could be changed so that assessment is no longer seen as a single event, completely in the hands of the teacher.

The following part highlights specific features of new assessment practices.

To know what is expected

Teachers of writing can define good writing. They know what the qualities are that could classify writing as good or bad and the points by which it will be judged. These qualities can be made explicit or teachers can let learners guess (McTighe and Ferrara: 1994). Arter lists ideas, organisation, voice, word choice, sentence fluency and accurate conventions as criteria (1994a: 1). These must be clearly communicated to the writer as points which are valued in their work, as well as points by which they will be judged. Assessment should capture the demands of a task. How could the demands of a task be communicated? Arter believes that criteria should be given to learners and these are 'teachable', they provide students with access to the 'secrets of

success' (1994a: 3). Worsham adds that research indicates that thinking skills can be improved through instruction of thinking skills and processes (1991:3).

When learners know what is expected of them their learning improves (Wyatt-Smith 1997; Sperling and Mahalak: 1993). Shay found that writing skills are not just learned along the way but need to be imparted to students in explicit ways. Inglis and Yeld (in Shay 1997) found that poorly written English was a result of poor grasp of the demands of the task. The logic from this is that if the student knows what the task demands, their writing would improve. These expectations can be made explicit in the form of criteria.

If our expectations are clarified before a task, then the assessment should reflect how learners have performed on every aspect of these requirements. This is done by criterion-referenced assessment. Wood enumerates the advantages of a criterion referenced approach to assessment

1. it deals with individual achievement relative to himself rather than another
2. it seeks to test for competence rather than intelligence
3. it takes place in relatively uncontrolled conditions and so does not produce well-behaved data
4. it looks for best rather than typical performance
5. it is most effective when rules and regulations of standardised testing are relaxed
6. it embodies a constructive look on assessment where the aim is to help rather than sentence the individual.

(Wood: 1988:194)

The individual's performance is measured in accordance with pertinent criteria rather than in comparison with others. Performance is described, rather than compared against someone else. In this way strengths and weaknesses of an individual on a given task could be identified. These descriptions could be either numerical, qualitative or both. Decisions on which to use depend on the purpose of assessment. If the purpose is to inform learners of their performance on specific criteria and at the same time develop confidence in their writing abilities, a numerical score as well as qualitative judgements could be used. For instance if a learner scored 4 on the numerical rating then the matching judgement could be 'getting there'. The most important thing is to make learners understand that learning is a process and that they still have an opportunity to improve.

I shall try to summarize how the proponents of alternative assessment understood this process. The learning goals in a writing task are first identified. Their

achievement is determined by evaluative criteria. This means a close link between achievement of a learning outcome and its assessment. It also means that the curriculum or the learning goal determines the instruction and should be reflected in criteria and the choice of assessment. In this way a dependent relationship between the learning goal and its achievement is established. Berlin describes alternative assessment as 'post-modern assessment', when both process and product can be valued and communicated to the learner (in Hamp-Lyons: 1995:451).

Halden-Sullivan points to the problems of a misalignment between criteria and pedagogical practice. She warns that misalignment can 'dangerously undercut exactly what writing programmes hope to promote - students capable of confidently managing their own texts' (1996:173). In her study she showed how teachers advocating a process approach did not reflect this in their criteria. Instructors did not evaluate the evolution of learners' writing for revisions. Writing was treated as a product. Like others (Hamp-Lyons: 1995; Elbow: 1997; White: 1994) she believes that 'Assessment can encourage effective composing processes if it apportions value to those processes' (1996:177).

Shalem and Slonimsky question the belief that criteria can be made explicit at all. Their skepticism is framed around the questions they ask: 'Are criteria self-evident?' or 'Can we be given criteria?' They mean that in order to 'give' criteria, educators must know what these criteria are in the first place. This leads to another problem, that 'we must reach consensus on what counts as good practice' (1998:3). In other words if writing is considered a creative act then how can we reach consensus as to how artistry for writing should be constructed? So much of writing is hidden and criteria only measure explicit and observable phenomenon (1998: 4-5). Their questions raise important concerns that can only be tested in the authentic context of the classroom. If criteria were only set for the technical and the mechanical parts of writing then setting criteria would not be a major problem. In this regard Wiggins suggests setting criteria for form and organisation are necessary but good writing should have an impact on a reader. Good writing should be interesting, engaging and persuasive, and criteria should reflect this intent (1994:6). Halden-Sullivan speaks of being 'appreciative of assessment's primacy as an instigator of an appetite for experience' and that criteria should not be 'closed instruments in the sense of being a complete account of all teachers tell students is important in a given text' (1996:191).

In contrast to the argument of Shalem and Slonimsky, Kress, et al, (1992) have pointed out the benefits for learners when criteria for genre writing are made explicit. They also point out how these can eventually be internalised from continuous exposure. Learners can eventually make these their own and so set in motion a way to reach for better and more improved ways of writing. White says in relation to internalizing criteria that 'Teaching and writing would combine...to help students internalize and apply criteria that would improve their work and make it more meaningful' (1994:289). Learners could eventually be led to construct their own criteria.

So how do criteria evolve? One way is through reading the works of writers as a community of teachers. The points that characterise the writing can be formulated right there and then through these readings. This has already been extensively done for portfolio reading particularly in the USA where portfolio assessment is a popular way of teaching and assessing writing (Spandel and Culham: 1994b). Hamp-Lyons admits that this could become a positivist and mechanical experience but it need not be if the people you are working with are 'experienced, enthusiastic...who begin to read and talk about what they read' (1995:454). These readers will 'remember that their reading is not the only reading a text could get, that there are other ways of "seeing" a text. This is not a positivist experience' (p.455). White speaks in detail of the impact that community reading sessions for portfolio assessment has on the curriculum and teaching (in Hamp-Lyons: 1995:454-55). Despite Wiggins's enthusiasm for devising 'creative' criteria, he does warn against the danger of creating criteria by 'blind consensus' and advises not to 'avoid controversial or difficult-to-assess characteristics'. His answer to those who believe that criteria inhibit creativity has less to do with the criteria set but more with 'inappropriate' criteria. Rather criteria should 'evolve' in accordance with audience and purpose (1994:1).

The genre-based approach to assessment defines and sharpens assessment criteria in terms of genre expectations, though as Wyatt-Smith points out there is no mandated format or 'metalanguage' for specifying criteria and standards (1997). With genre assessment the learner is made aware of context-text connections, and that they will be assessed on their ability to write in a style appropriately suited to the purpose and audience. This in turn reinforces the school's connection with the real world.

Single or multiple?

'Holistic scoring is the biggest enemy of thoughtful evaluation' (in Hamp-Lyons: Elbow: 1995)

'Holistic assessment of writing is the most reliable and valid way of judging performance on a written task' (in Hamp-Lyons: White: 1995).

'No one method can inform the teacher' (Winograd and Perkins: no date:)

According to Huot there are three main ways of judging the quality of writing.

1. Primary-trait. Specific traits are judged in accordance with writing prompts.
2. Analytic scoring. This identifies many qualities for good writing.
3. Holistic scoring. This gives a general impression of the quality of a piece of writing.

(Huot: 1990:238)

The method mostly used in South African schools has been a combination of holistic methods and primary trait scoring.

However the voices on the best method have been self-righteous on both ends of the assessment spectrum. Wiggins' and Elbow's derision of those who give a single score equals White's belief in 'holistic scoring'. The dissatisfaction with single scores or single comments was a result of changing assessment practices. How could a complex act like writing be reduced to a single score? How can teachers claim that this is objective? Holistic scoring has been the norm but Hamp-Lyons offers us some light when she says 'at last the composition community is seriously questioning the value and the validity of holistic scoring...' (1995:453).

Arter recommends that teachers should rather use 'analytical trait criteria' rather than holistic criteria. If we make criteria clear to our learners then this is what we must assess. Most would agree that we like writing that has a strong message, is well organised, sincere, honest, fluent and conventionally correct, so why not make these criteria explicit? She puts it bluntly: 'we can make these clear or we can make them guess' as she details the mechanics of just how teachers can go about the business of making the criteria 'clear' (1994a:3).

This does not mean we should abandon holistic assessing. Holistic assessment is faster and simpler, particularly when teacher time is involved. Huot says in relation to college compositions that it takes up to 2 to 3 minutes for holistic scoring and 1 to 2 minutes for each trait (1990:239). Wood proposes a strategy based on the purpose for which writing is assessed. If for instance the purpose is diagnostic then some essays

could be rated analytically while others holistically particularly if teacher time is an issue (1994:17). White, a strong proponent of holistic scoring, says that

rather than reducing the complex phenomenon of writing, holistic scoring recognizes that writing ability is more than the sum of its parts. Attempts to break writing into its "parts"...can cause frustration for markers and result in unreliable outcomes since there is little professional consensus on the definition and importance of these sub-skills

(1994:233).

Elbow goes further than simply saying that teachers should stop using quantitative symbols to evaluate learners. He pleads with teachers to entirely step out of judging learners. He calls this a mind shift when teachers can sincerely show learners that 'they can write in the way they want to write it and to accept and value risky, even "bad" writing'. In this way students will 'loosen up in the space provided by ungraded writing' and teachers will 'manage to win the trust' of students. Elbow claims that '...we can improve the climate for writing and learning in this way' (1997: 8). Elbow lists his reasons against giving narrative evaluations because

- They aren't trustworthy.
- They don't have clear meaning.
- They don't give students feedback about what they did well or badly.
- They undermine the teaching-and-learning situation in these ways:
 - by leading many students to work for more for the sake of the grade than of learning;
 - by leading to an adversarial relationship between students and teachers (since some students quarrel with our grades and many others feel resentful)
 - by leading to a competitive atmosphere
- Figuring out grades is difficult and anxious.

(Elbow: 1997:6)

Elbow passionately pursues his line of argument by saying that his experience of papers has been a 'jumble of strengths and weaknesses that don't fit on a single scale' (1997:11). Elbow refuses to use words such as grades, and he suggests that asking the question 'But how will you assess?' simply means getting yourself into a rut because the question is unanswerable. He 'describes' papers, their meanings and implications and not about how good or bad they are. Process theorists such as Emig have pointed to an enabling environment to nurture the child's creative abilities (1971; 1990). Elbow feels that this very climate would be undermined with grades. When teachers stop giving judgements they will find that an atmosphere of support and

appreciation that will help students flourish, think well, and stretch themselves (1997:14).

Hamp-Lyons supports Elbow's position but she prefers to use the term 'multiple trait scoring' to 'analytic scoring'. She believes that this term goes further than Elbow's term in that it incorporates local theory of what good writing is and forces us to be specific about what we like and don't like in a text and why. White argues that even these sub-skills approaches are 'akin' to holistic scoring. The difference between the two is that the former is more sharply focused on particular traits (1994:285).

Huot suggests the best method of assessment is one developed 'within the context of a specific testing situation' (1990:239). This appears to be what Hamp-Lyons means by 'analytic scoring' which incorporates local theory of writing.

Just as process and product moved into the forefront for ESL, so assessment stepped beside it in our understanding of how to teach writing. Questions about teaching writing effectively cannot be asked without placing assessment right at the front line.

Attempts to develop alternative strategies should be examined critically. Nor should it be as Sandra Murphy cautions us, in the case of portfolio writing, that it could just mean 'more of the same but put in a folder' (in Hamp-Lyons: 1995:450-51) or as McLean refers to the procedure followed by portfolio's as 'old wine in new bottles' (1995: 46).

Participant assessors

Sperling and Mahalak (1993) list five reasons to support learner self-assessment:

- learners develop and take responsibility for their learning
- learners are motivated to improve and become independent
- learners internalize criteria for good writing
- learners come to understand the path they must travel to improve
- it promotes the skills to think critically and reflectively
- it forces teachers to re-evaluate their criteria

(Sperling and Mahalak: 1993:3).

Thus the context for self assessment should be placed against the ideas of more learner involvement and more democratic engagement in the learning task. Self

assessment for this context cannot achieve these aims if it simply becomes part of traditional learning and teaching (Boud: 1995:36).

Besides the implications mentioned by Sperling and Mahalak above for self assessment, Boud also mentions the changing relationship between learner and teacher and its implications for the language of assessment. If the teacher were no longer the sole assessor of learners' works then they would assume less control of the learning process. Teachers have to examine this changed dynamic very carefully to determine not only if they are ready, but also if learners themselves are ready for this new responsibility. The present language of assessment for Boud:

is language which leaves no room for manoeuvre. It has the final say. Not only are such terms damaging, but they communicate nothing of substance about the work being assessed. They are empty rhetoric, and have no place in the discourse of learning.

(Boud: 1995:45)

In the place of language that is stagnant and without real meaning should be the discourse of possibilities. All feedback should be constructive and help individuals to learn more effectively.

Accuracy appeared to be the most concern when learners were involved with ratings. In a comprehensive overview of learners' self assessment ratings, Boud found that learners varied widely in how they rated themselves. Some rated themselves as they thought their teachers would, while others either over or under rated themselves. However, he found that ratings were directly related to the ability of the learner. So that the more able learners rated themselves more accurately than the less able.

Hibbard and his colleagues 'coach(ed) students.... through self assessment to view the work more accurately'. They hoped that eventually students would be 'wean(ed)...' from this coaching to independent self assessment. This is a long process and may take many years to complete (1994:6). Learner responsibility is a natural consequence of alternative techniques and self-assessment is inbuilt in this new responsibility.

Part of learning for self assessment is for learners to set criteria themselves. Teachers can also assist learners in developing criteria. In this way students 'develop a richer appreciation of what the standards for success are', while this in turn opens up 'avenues for self-improvement' (Sperling:1994:1). Sperling refers us to teachers who have used collaborative assessment in their classrooms with great success and 'that it can cross all levels and all subjects. In her enthusiasm for getting learners to develop

their own written criteria she says '...educators who have used collaborative assessment uniformly experience genuine excitement at the remarkable success of their students' (1994:11).

I have mainly concentrated on self assessment and have not discussed peer assessment. I believe that peer assessment is an adjunct to self assessment and has as powerful a role to play in developing alternative assessment techniques.

CHAPTER 3

IMPLEMENTING THE WRITING-ASSESSMENT PROGRAMME

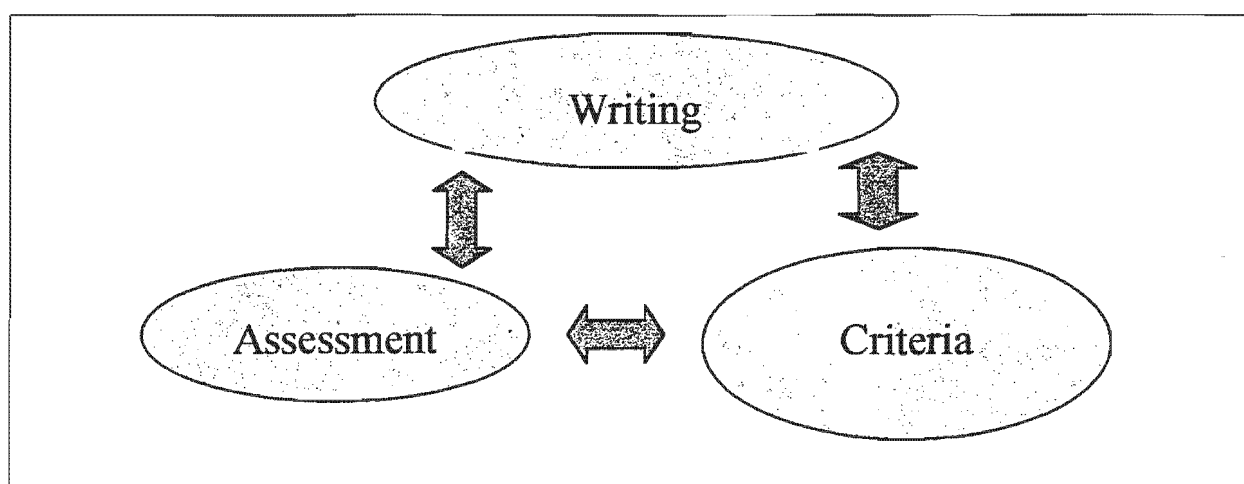
This chapter is informed by the theoretical considerations introduced in the previous chapter and the Flexible Writing and Assessment Programme (Appendix B). The Flexible Writing and Assessment Programme was constructed as a guide to the implementation of this programme. This guide consists of:

- the motivation for designing the specific writing and assessment tasks;
- the methodology for the writing tasks;
- the criteria for writing; and
- the details of the assessment (Appendix B).

It is necessary to emphasise that the Flexible Writing and Assessment Programme served as a guide. On many occasions it was necessary to deviate from it. However, an attempt was made to adhere to the letter of the programme.

There were three components of the writing and assessment programme: the *writing curriculum*, the *assessment* and the *criteria* represented as Figure 1. Each of the three components formed the theoretical framework for the implementation and analysis of the writing-assessment programme. The forward and backward directions of the arrows show the interrelationship and dependence of each component of the programme on the other. The arrows also show that writing and assessment are ongoing and related processes.

Figure 1: *Components of the writing and assessment programme*



The programme is divided into two focuses with a total of seven learning outcomes (LOs). Each LO was designed to introduce learners to new aspects of writing and alternative assessment techniques. Each LO is roughly made up of:

- writing task and output
- assessment task and output
- my reflections, observations and interpretation of writing and assessment

LOs 1 and 2 concentrated mainly on basic writing skills (word/phrases and sentence building), with criteria for writing and assessment becoming more of an issue from LO3 onwards. Thus only three learners' writings are presented here for the first two LOs.

FOCUS 1: BASIC WRITING SKILLS

3.1 Learning Outcome 1: Building Vocabulary: words/phrases

3.1.1 Writing task and output

This was a shared group-writing activity. Learners discussed and shared their responses with words/phrases to given artifacts. For each artifact and under separate headings, individual learners wrote their responses on a page. Below is a table of responses to three artifacts.

The following are examples of the writing outputs for all three artifacts by three of the seven study subjects.

Table 1 *Descriptions in response to objects, pictures and music*

Learner	Object	Picture	Music <u>Jazz /Classical Guitar</u> <u>Inka Jazz Fusion/Reggae -</u> <u>samples played to the whole</u> <u>class</u>
<i>Karl</i>	<i><u>Native American mask</u> colourful mask voodoo nightmarish creature pre-historic creature Native God tribe leader's mask</i>	<i><u>Moscow city</u> the city of I see a(n) orchestra The structure of the building tells me it's in Moscow It is an international music orchestra</i>	<i>jazz music makes me sleepy lovely music piano classical guitar</i>
<i>Janice</i>	<i><u>Metal jigsaw</u> brass ornament engravement tall tower spaceship</i>	<i><u>Group of young ballerinas</u> beautiful ladies dressed in white lace Sade hairstyles ballerina girls light of complec(x)tion aerobic performance</i>	<i>refreshing(ly) different exotic exciting and soothing weird uplifting</i>
<i>Lindi</i>	<i><u>Coloured Box</u> triangular shaped box rough texture top of house dull grey colour make up hair accessories</i>	<i><u>Ancient graveyard</u> man mountain like simble (symbol)</i>	<i>strange unfamiliar (unfamiliar) stimulating refreshing different</i>

Learners highlighted adjectives, nouns and verbs using different coloured pens for each part of speech.

3.1.2 Assessment task and output

Learners assessed their own as well as their groups' responses at the end of the words/ phrases session by writing down their choices below the writing task. I provided the options below.

<u>Self-assessment options</u> <u>options</u>	<u>Group assessment</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ I was able to respond to the word/phrases/picture/music ▪ I could only find a few words/phrases ▪ I did not understand what the teacher asked me to do 	<p>Our group worked excellently 😊</p> <p>Our group did not work well 😞</p>

The following was the assessment output for both the self and group assessments.

Self Assessment

Karl : 'I was able to respond to the object'.

Janice and Lindi wrote 'I was able to respond to the object'.

Group Assessment

Janice described her group's work as 'Excellent'.

Karl assessed his group as 'Okay'.

Lindi omitted her group assessment.

I assessed this LO for all the learners at the end of Focus I (see 3.3.2 and 3.3.4).

3.1.3 Observation and reflection of the writing process

As I walked around the class learners asked for synonyms of words and for spelling. Examples of words that learners asked to be spelt were 'orchestra', 'complexion' and 'ballerina'. I immediately wrote these on the board as part of a 'pooling' exercise. It would have been ideal for learners themselves to look up the meaning and spelling in a dictionary but neither the immediate situation nor the available time made this possible.

Even though I had made an effort to establish a classroom atmosphere where learners would feel uninhibited and secure about speaking and writing, learners appeared hesitant and anxious and asked for additional guidance and explanations about what they were expected to do. It was only after a more detailed explanation that the class got down to the group work and later seemed very interested and serious in discussion. They appeared to be talking enthusiastically about the shape, colours and uses of the objects as they did for the other artifacts, and wrote down words/phrases.

This initial hesitancy of learners to the writing tasks could partly be explained by the novelty of the activity. They might also have been feeling anxious about working in groups where their writing would be on display. I also tried to downplay their anxiety by reminding them that their personal responses were important. One learner suddenly recognised the value of this and responded by saying 'Oh, so you say can anything...'. In this way he realised that what he thought and had to say was important and was valued.

It appeared that spelling appeared to bother learners the most. Misspelling was perceived as deserving of punishment. In another class activity one learner commented that because she did not know how to spell 'big' words, she preferred not to use them in her

writing and would just leave them out. Perhaps a separate lesson or a discussion about spelling would have been appropriate at this point.

Highlighting words was not only fun for learners but focused them in a very unpressurised way on how words could affect meaning. In relation to this activity when asked at a later stage (Appendix C) 'Can you please tell me what made these times enjoyable?'. One learner said '...having fun most of the time but still doing your work.'

3.1.4 Interpretation and reflection of the assessment process

The assessment tools and techniques were deliberately kept simple, increasing in complexity later for the other LOs. I thought that having both individual and group assessment would make everyone accountable to each other as well as to their group. When asked about working with others, Karl said that he learned to '...work in a group'. Learners also had to trust each other to be able to assess their groups positively or negatively. Learners quickly set about the assessment task and were eagerly engaged in assessing themselves and their peers. Learners were eager to show mistakes and seemed very enthusiastic and playful about this. I intervened and spoke about positive assessment. I could hear and feel their excitement when evaluating themselves and peers. It didn't matter at this early stage if they were assessing correctly or not. This would come later.

I will pick up on a few written responses to the objects artifact. Karl and Lindi used colourful adjectives. They say what the object looked like (nightmarish, colourful, dull) and what the object represented (voodoo, pre-historic creature, jelly-fish, top of house). Lindi took her descriptions further with abstractions such as similes. Janice's words were quite ordinary and not as imaginative as Lindi's. All the learners appeared quite careful in choosing their words.

The programme lists a fourth artifact, a drawing. I decided not to use this because I sensed that learners were ready to move on to LO2. Another reason was that learners appeared to be involved in what they were doing and I wanted to maintain their interest.

3.2 Learning Outcome 2: Making Sentences from Familiar Words/phrases

3.2.1 Writing task and output

Learners were each given a coloured sheet of paper on which to write as many sentences as they liked by using the words/phrases written for LO1. I asked learners to highlight adjectives, nouns and verbs from LO1 (see 3.1.1) in sentences.

Logical connectors were introduced. I demonstrated this with examples and showed how these could be used in 'complex' and 'simple sentences', and by example showed what distinguished the one from the other.

A number of different exercises were introduced. For instance an unpacking and repacking exercise. For the unpacking exercise, groups were asked to write sentences on an OHP transparency and to write three variations of the same sentence, including the same information. For the repacking exercise learners wrote one long sentence using three short sentences. Only a few examples of the writing output are reproduced here.

Table 2 *Sentences used with Objects -words/phrases task*

Student	Sentences
<i>Karl</i>	<i>The clown at the circus wore a very colourful mask. I saw a voodoo mask. Last night I dreamed about a nightmares (nightmarish) creature. I saw a pre-historic creature at the museum. Tribes worship native God's. The tribe leader wore a tribe leader's mask.</i>
<i>Janice</i>	<i>The spaceship is about to take to the moon. There is a tall tower in Paris. The object is oval and tall. The lighthouse stood neglected on the hill</i>
<i>Lindi</i>	<i>The man looked very sad. I think that the mountain is the most beautiful creation on earth. The sea looks very peaceful at night. Our school's grass touched my knee.</i>

3.2.2 Assessment task and output

I assessed this LO in 3.3.2 and 3.3.4.

3.2.3 Observation and reflection of the writing process

Writing simple and complex sentences is not foreign to learners. Their use here was to teach an important technique. It was also used to create consciousness about writing.

In the exercise for sentence variation one learner used this metaphor to show how he had understood its power: *'It was like having a wardrobe where you could mix and match your shirts and skirts to suit the occasion.'*

For another it: *'... was like putty, you can shape it in different ways and make different things with it.'*

At the same time some learners said they found sentence variation exercises 'difficult'. After doing more examples it appeared that learners were energetically trying out sentences, 'shaping', 'mixing and matching them'. There was laughter from their peers at some strange sentences, but this was without ill will.

It was important at this point to make every child feel that they were making progress to build confidence for the LO3. I mentioned before that my attempt to encourage learners would be deliberate.

It was worth spending time on this LO for cascading the writing act (see chapter 4). I hoped that in this way learners would be able see the word-sentence-paragraphs connection.

3.2.4 Interpretation and reflection of the assessment process

According to the programme, criteria were to be introduced, as well as self-assessment. After their confusion and difficulty with sentence variation I decided not to interfere with another new task but moved directly onto LO3.

All the learners made a deliberate attempt to use descriptive words for nouns and all were able to build sentences from words/phrases. They used mostly 'It is' or 'I saw....'. They did not make many complex sentences with more than one idea. However Karl's sentences seemed more complex in ideas. From the single phrase 'colourful mask' he developed the sentence, 'The clown at the circus wore a very colourful mask'. Lindi also had short and relatively lively sentences. Her sentences were simple and emotional. This learner obviously

has an individual style that should be nurtured. She did not use complex sentences but at the same time one could appreciate the simplicity of her response. Learners made meaningful and grammatically correct sentences and so far it was easy to observe the development of particular skills.

3.3 Learning Outcome 3: Paragraph Writing

3.3.1 Writing task and output

By using an example on the OHP, I demonstrated the coherence and logical development of paragraph writing. First I demonstrated what held a paragraph together. Using a number of different examples I described what was meant by a main sentence and how the rest of the sentences in a paragraph gave more detail about the topic sentence. I showed examples of how ideas were organised in paragraphs so that its meaning was made clear to the reader. I pointed out how sentences varied in paragraphs, that some sentences were short while longer sentences used logical connectors. I showed learners how they could start their sentences with different words. On their own, learners wrote paragraphs using sentences they had made for the previous LO. Learners decided on which sentence to choose as their main sentence and which details to add for their paragraph.

As an additional paragraph building exercise I asked learners to 'spot the stranger'. I did this by inserting fairly well disguised uncontextualised sentences in paragraphs. Learners had to identify the 'stranger' (Willis:1996:79).

In another lesson I explained the meaning and importance of criteria. Learners looked at the paragraphs they had just written and rewrote the same paragraph but used the criteria that were written on the OHP transparency. I explained that these were general criteria. They copied the criteria for later use. These were the criteria learners were introduced to:

Criteria for Paragraph Writing

- My paragraph has one main idea
- The rest of the sentences give more details about the main idea
- I used adjectives to colour my writing
- My paragraph makes sense when I read it out loud
- I used sentences from previous exercises on objects/picture/music

Below are samples of learners' writings before and after criteria

Before criteria:

By Janice:

The spaceship is about to take off. On that day I was in Paris watching the take off from the tower. They brought a unique brass instrument from the moon. The engravement looked unusual and stood on display in the gallery.

By Karl

A down is a person who can play a prank on you any time in any place. The place where you can find a down like that is the Boswill Wilkie circus.

By Hedley:

I went to the gallery and saw a unique brass ornament. The ornament as an object was tall and oval. To some it should have looked like a spaceship. The engravement which was used looked outrages and fit into modern day fashion. The way I saw it stood between other ornaments in the display cabinet it looked like an neglected light house on a hill top. So I see that each and every person has their own unique way of seeing things.

By Lindi:

It was in the middle of a forest that they found the big cross. It looks like someone had made it with stone. No-one knew where it came from. There were Scientists and eiedogist at the scene. No-one could explain how it had got there. Some people believe it was put there by a space-ship.

By Candice:

While walking next to a tall tower in Parys. I saw three aliens taking of in a spaceship. This aliens were different of the one's I saw on tv. As I walked further on I almost bumped in a brass ornament that looked like a spaceship.

By Zena:

We African people are very creative. As Africans we create a lot of new things. Things like art, drama, poetry, songs etc. Everyday there is someone being creative and that person may become famous in the future of his/her creation.

Emily was absent for this writing task

After criteria (revised paragraph):

By Janice:

*The **big silver** spaceship was about to take off. On that **glorious** day I was in Paris France **enjoying a delicious cup of coffee**. I was watching the take off at the tower. When they returned they brought **the most** unique brass ornament from the moon. The engravement on the ornament **looked like an alien figure with a big oval head and red, evil eyes**. It stood on display in the local gallery for everybody to see.*

By Karl:

*The **funny** down at the circus amuses the crowd while they are waiting for the next act. Clowns are very famous for their **colourful clothing and funny tricks**.*

By Hedley:

*Yesterday I went to the gallery in town. I saw **spectacular arts and crafts** and especially brass ornaments. At the gallery I saw a unique brass ornament. This particular ornament stood tall between the other ornaments. The cabinet which it stood in **was over protected, it had alarm systems all over it**. The engravement on the ornament was outrages and **gave the ornament lots of attraction**. To me it looked like a spaceship, but to others it could have looked like something else, because we all see and view things differently.*

By Lindi:

*It was in the middle of a forest that they found the **mysterious cross**. It was big and shiny and looked very peculiar. **Inquisitive** scientists and **paelentologists** were at the **scene but even they could explain the queer but beautiful cross**. Some **over imaginative** people even believe it was put there by **strange, evil beings of another unknown planet**.*

By Candice:

***When I was walking in France visiting places I've never seen before**. I came to a well build tall tower in Parys. **Suddenly** I saw three aliens **one was small and the other two big**, they were taking off in a spaceship. This aliens looked different of the one's I usually see in films on television. While walking further on I saw a gallery and went on in to find out more about the particular aliens I saw, when I was standing and watching one of the statue aliens I almost bumped into the other one behind me.*

By Zena:

Africa is one of the biggest and exciting continents in the world. One of its pride country is South Africa. All through Africa people follow the tradition of their ancestors. There are a lot of different cultures in Africa. As an African I belong to my own culture . Africans are very creative they create a lot of new and exiting things. We improved our country of being creative. Creative is one of the most important things in African lives.

By Emily:

Last week me and my friends volunteered to help clean the beach. As we were cleaning we came across a group of seashells. All my friends took a seashell. They all were beautiful I didn't know which one to choose. I finally decided to pick one and I picked the smoothest one. The seashell was so smooth on the inside it felt like soap. The outside was a little rough but it didn't matter because it had the most beautiful colours. On the inside it was pink with blue shining through, and on the outside it was white with grey in between. When I got home I decided to put it on my dressing table because it matched beautifully with my music box and my small teddy bears.

3.3.2 Assessment task and output

I assessed all the work done so far for Focus 1: Basic writing skills. Each learner was given an assessment page exactly like the one below.

Assessment: From Words on a Page to Sentences to Paragraphs					
WORDS/PHRASES					
Responded with words/phrases to Objects/Pictures	1	2	3	4	5
Used colourful words to describe objects and pictures	1	2	3	4	5
SENTENCES					
Made sentences with words/phrases	1	2	3	4	5
Sentences were varied and different	1	2	3	4	5
Some sentences were short while others were long	1	2	3	4	5
Could express the same idea in different ways	1	2	3	4	5
Generated new sentences	1	2	3	4	5
Sentences were interesting and held the readers attention	1	2	3	4	5
PARAGRAPHS					
Used sentences in paragraphs	1	2	3	4	5
First sentence was the MAIN IDEA	1	2	3	4	5
Other sentences gave more details about the main idea	1	2	3	4	5
Paragraph communicated clearly to the reader	1	2	3	4	5
Interesting and painted a picture in the reader's mind	1	2	3	4	5
Clear that the paragraph is the writer's personal ideas	1	2	3	4	5

Explanation of the assessment page

The assessment for all three LOs was designed for the ability to communicate meaning to a reader, for demonstrating the skills of paragraph writing, for arranging ideas in logical sequence and for grammatical correctness. Implied in this is a developing focus from LO1 through to LO3 in the composing process. By assessing the three LOs together I hoped learners would see the relationship between their composing processes, criteria for paragraph writing, self and peer assessment and the assessment criteria.

By assessing for voice and audience ('held the reader's attention/communicated clearly to the reader/clear that that the paragraph is the writers' personal ideas), I had hoped developing writers would see that it was not only grammatical conventions that mattered but that ideas as well. I tried to do this with the second assessment criteria in words/phrases, the fourth and sixth criteria in sentence assessment criteria, and then again in assessment criteria four, five and six for paragraphs. Each of the assessment criteria was placed on a scale from 1 to 5 with matching descriptors. These were:

- 1: Not yet there: you still need to work on this
 - 2: Getting there: starting but still need to work on this
 - 3: Satisfactory: your work shows promise
 - 4: Good: you are strong on this
 - 5: Outstanding strengths
- (adapted from Oregon's Writing Assessment Program:1994)

The intention of the descriptors was to develop writers capable of managing their own texts. Inherent in 'Not yet there' or 'Getting there' implies just such development. None of the descriptors is negative, rather they imply that the learner is capable, and has a chance of improvement.

3.3.3 Observation and reflection of the writing process

This writing activity started off with an explanation of the mechanics of what holds a paragraph together and how ideas in a paragraph could be organized. Learners had to implement these instructions. A teacher-centered method was needed because of the specific nature of this LO. Learners were consciously introduced to the skills of writing by the explicit use of criteria. Previously I described my writers as unconfident and felt that this role of being prescriptive and giving firm instructions at particular times would build confidence.

I noticed some distress and anxiety. Learners repeatedly asked for more explanation of the criteria and its application. I had interfered with a familiar way of writing. I wondered whether this would inhibit learners. I was also concerned about inhibiting their creativity and spontaneity while trying to work out how to apply criteria. I felt uncomfortable and thought that I might have restricted them into believing that writing was rule-governed. I had explained that writing skills had some conventions and they should see these criteria as guidelines. Many learners were not doing anything and sitting quietly, while others were writing and perhaps engaging in some kind of pre-writing activity. Perhaps it would have been more appropriate to start off with free-writing as a way in. On the other hand learners' perceived reticence or confusion could have meant that they were mentally grappling with the task. I decided to take this view and maintained my distance only giving help when asked.

There was much laughter and fun for the 'spot the stranger' paragraph particularly when learners disagreed with which sentence was the 'stranger'. This loosening exercise is not only fun but for learners to know that writing is not a rigid activity with right or wrong answers. There can and must be disagreement. This takes the mystery and fear out of writing and learners can see and experience playing with words. Also learners would know there was no one way of doing things and that their opinions mattered.

3.3.4 Interpretation and reflection of the assessment process

The aim of making the criteria explicit was precisely to make writers more conscious of the writing they were engaged with. Later the following question was asked about the usefulness of criteria (Reflection Questionnaire in Appendix C), 'When the teacher gives you guidelines or criteria do you use them, and find them useful? Tell me about this', These were some of the comments, both positive and negative.

'...it gives me an idea of what to do... a pattern of how I must (go and) write my story to make it more interesting...'

'...it gives me the skills...'

'makes my paragraphs flow, it makes my work more colourful'

'Yes because I focus a lot on the work'

'now I have an idea, a pattern of how I must go and write my story to make it more exciting'

'yes it helped me to see what guidelines I must use and be more creative about it'

'I find it very useful and interesting because I've never done it before'

'It makes writing very easy'

'Yes...not only my writing, but also the way I speak...'

'my sentences are not all jumbled together'

'...sometimes. When the teacher gives me criteria I do find it useful but I want to write my own things. I want to write my ideas too...'

'...no, because I like to write from the heart...'

'...without..My reason is I do not understand so well.'

These comments appear to show that criteria gave some learners an idea of how to proceed. What the expectations were became clearer. These comments are positive in the sense that learners felt that criteria gave them some guidance and direction on how to proceed. The more negative feelings were either about not understanding the use of criteria or feeling that criteria were a curtailment. For the learner who said 'I want to write my ideas too...', criteria for this learner meant that he could not express his ideas and that they imposed other ideas; it could have meant that he did not understand that criteria were guidelines for the skills of writing.

Up to this point assessment had been informal using self, peer or group assessment techniques. The assessment had also been done in relatively isolated parts for the words/phrases, moving on to sentences and then on to paragraphs. I felt that assessment that reflected the composing process was needed at this stage. Learners also expected an assessment from the teacher.

The assessment was general and the same for all learners. The assessment criteria were localised starting off with the needs of learners. Both of these were intended. The

assessment was also deliberately kept simple and easy for learners to follow. In designing the assessment criteria I tried to maintain a link between the criteria for paragraph writing and the assessment. When I asked learners if they had understood the assessment criteria some comments were:

'No and Yes...I understand a little'

'No...it was too hard...'

'A little bit confused...'

'I like all the assessment but there are still some things I did not understand'

Some of the more positive comments were:

'...it is a way because then I know what I am doing. It also shows that with a little help you can go a long way in making a success of your work. It helped me a lot since I knew about it.'

'...yes I can see where I went wrong and can make it write'

'I'm not yet where I want to be but with practice I'll get better'

'It made me want to write more often'

'Its all new and ...[look for this] between the criteria for paragraph writing and the assessment criteria'.

Assessment of paragraphs

A closer look at the writing after criteria (see 3.3.1) showed that Karl and Hedley understood the first skill, which was that each paragraph, had one main idea. Janice wrote two main ideas for her paragraph, the second beginning with 'When they returned...'. Two other areas showed a difference. One was giving more detail and the other, adding adjectives. Janice was particularly expressive and added 'big, silver'; 'glorious'; and her second paragraph 'looked like an alien figure...'. Even though it might be argued that these were not particularly creative, the change before and after criteria should be noted and the learner is given credit. Either Janice did not understand the first criteria or she did not see that her paragraph had two main ideas. She was given a score of '2' = Getting There for the second criteria of the paragraph writing. Janice's skill for paragraph writing varied between satisfactory and good as far as the last four criteria were concerned. She used adjectives and adverbs appropriately, combining the use of simple and complex sentences adequately. This was her 'voice' and she communicated clearly with her reader.

Hedley also added more detail and used adjectives such as 'spectacular' and 'over protected'. He placed himself firmly in this imaginative experience. In his last paragraph he made it clear what this experience meant to him though others might have a different interpretation because we all 'see and view things differently'. He remembered this from the first LO when learners were told that *their* words and interpretation mattered most. Hedley

used varied sentences and was strong on the last criteria. He did this with his final sentence of letting the reader know that this was his experience. He personalised the experience with the pronoun 'I'. For the second last criteria he described the ornament with good details. I gave him 4 = Good for the third criteria. His paragraph could possibly have contained two main ideas and scored a 3 = Satisfactory for the second criteria.

Karl also added more detail such as 'colourful clothing and funny tricks'. He did however only write two sentences and the addition of more detail would have improved this paragraph. Karl had two complex sentences for his whole paragraph, but scored a 3 = Satisfactory for the third criteria. He used two complex sentences that communicated to an audience. For this criteria he scored 4 = Good.

Lindi's writing showed that she had taken the idea of making her writing more imaginative seriously. Her writing abounds with descriptive words and she cleverly used descriptive words. For the fourth and fifth criteria she was given 4 = Good and for the sixth criteria she scored 3 = Satisfactory. Her third sentence is another main idea but this can be explained by the fact that learners had to write one paragraph only and they obviously wanted to get as much information down from their words/phrases to sentence building exercises.

Zena almost totally changed her revised paragraph though sticking to the theme of the original about African people. She omits the details of first paragraph such as the examples of art, drama, poetry and songs.

Candice's paragraph needed grammatical corrections though she would not have known this from the assessment criteria. The intention of this exercise was on paragraph development and not on correct grammar so I decided to ignore her errors. It was evident from my observations that learners were overly concerned with 'big' words and correct spelling and I wanted the focus to move from this. Grammar correction would come later.

By assessing learners in this way I was able to draw general as well as specific conclusions for each individual. All the learners were able to make sentences from the words/phrases and used their sentences to build paragraphs. All the learners appeared quite strong for creativity (using adjectives and verbs and adverbs appropriately). Perhaps this writing had to be taken further and a more complicated task should be introduced. Learners should go on to construct linking paragraphs. Topic sentences could be retaught or taught differently.

Learners could see what their strong and weak points were for specific skills. Criteria cannot and were not intended to cover all aspects of writing. For instance there were no

criteria for concord, subject-verb agreement (although there were no such errors in the writings of these learners this is a common error for ESL learners).

When learners were asked what they thought of the assessment (Appendix C), some said that they did not understand, others said it was new and they were trying 'to get to grips' with them. The more positive replies were: *'My feelings was never put down because I know in this assessment you were only trying to do your best and no wrong or write answers...'*

FOCUS 2: GENRE

3.4 Learning Outcome 4: Audience and Register: text types/beginnings and endings

Writing floats on a sea of talk (Wilkinson:1983).

I decided to do this LO orally only. This was a difficult area and I first wanted learners to loosen up.

3.4.1 Oral task

Learners were given a variety of texts and asked to identify their sources. They were also given texts with beginnings and endings and asked to classify these as a beginning, an ending or the middle of a prose piece. Besides familiarising learners with beginnings and endings, I wanted to introduce Genre and its identification. In addition learners were given a prose piece and asked to arrange paragraphs and jumbled sentences in the correct order. They discussed how they all fitted together. Learners were given the following text types for genre identification: a travel brochure; different newspaper articles; magazine articles; extracts from short stories; extracts from drama and poems. They were asked to identify these by asking questions such as: Who is it written for?, Where does it come from? and What is its purpose? These were all done orally in groups except for paragraph arranging which was done individually.

3.4.2 Assessment of genre identification

I hoped that learners would internalise criteria for different genres. I also hoped they would become acquainted with, and be able to identify register, style and voice. I walked around the class focussing on groups and assessed their judgements. When they were unsure or mistaken, I discussed the possibilities of their predictions with them. Learners appeared to do quite well on genre identification and were confident about identifying audience and style. They also talked about the differences in language patterns of the different genres.

Learners were asked questions about paragraph organisation. Their comments were general and specific to genre identification.

Janice said: *'The paragraph has to flow. By changing the paragraphs and putting them in the correct order, it makes sense. Taking out sentences that doesn't fit. The story sounds much better'*.

Lindi said: *'The sentences were not well arranged. There were sentences which didn't belong where they were...'*

Candice said: *'So that the paragraph could have a logical connection so that it may flow...'*

It is possible that Candice was confusing logical connectors with the logical development of paragraphs. Though the other learners appeared to understand the structure of paragraphs.

When learners were asked for written responses for paragraph organisation, they found these quite difficult to formulate. I include a comment from Hedley, not a good writer, but a confident person. His comment, which I recorded, had particular meaning.

'I told my mother that the ornaments we have can be looked at in many different ways..they are not just ornaments...in this way you can also say that people have many different points of view(s) and that there are different...how can I say...like when she looks at something and gives that explanation then I can have another one and we must respect what we say to each other...'

I believe that this learner realised that one could look at things differently and with new eyes. He realised that interpretation was important and that when these interpretations were different from your own and should be respected.

3.5 Learning Outcome 5: Finding Voice through Personal and Narrative Writing

We are learning to listen (Ponsot and Deen: 1991).

3.5.1 Writing task and output

There were a number of different writing tasks for this LO. All these writing tasks were supported and prefaced by free-writing and shared personal experiences. Writing topics that learners could choose from for personal writing were 'What is a Friend', 'Places and Spaces that I Like' and 'A Personal Experience'. Learners were given criteria for personal writing and added their own criteria to the list that was given.

Another writing task was 'Narrative writing' in the form of a newspaper article. Logical order and sequencing of events were important for both this and the previous writing mode. For the newspaper article learners placed themselves in the role of reporters who had to write about a violent incident . This was based on prescribed short story which learners had read in class. Words from the class were pooled as possible words for a newspaper article. Criteria for a news report were presented on OHP. Groups talked about these and matched these with their experience of reading news reports. Learners added new criteria to those already on the OHP transparency as part of a 'visual gathering' exercise for this genre (Millar:nd).

Below are the criteria for personal and narrative writing as well as learners' criteria for good writing standards for this genre.

Criteria for Personal or Life writing

- am I in my writing?
- did I say something interesting?
- do my sentences begin with different words?
- some sentences are short
- some sentences are long
- my writing is clear to others
- is this my own experience?
- is my writing creative?

Learners added

- **express my thoughts and feelings**
- **improve my vocabulary**
- **organize my writing**
- **word choice**
- **colourful, clear and understanding**

Criteria for Narrative writing -a news report

- first paragraph summarizes the story
- something interesting to tell
- punctuation such as inverted commas
- there is dialogue
- verbs describe the action that happened
- adjectives describe the characters
- others find the story exciting
- am I in my writing

Learners added the following criteria

- **eye-catching heading**
- **the rest of the paragraphs give more detail**
- **tense- when did the action happen**

Criteria for improving writing given by learners

- **use more creative words and phrases**
- **[make it more] interesting**
- **spell big words**
- **organise my writing**
- **word choice**
- **express my feelings**

Personal writing essay

What is a Friend?

Lindi wrote:

To me a friend is a rare and special thing. It's when you have a special bond with someone you truly love and treasure. You share your deepest thoughts and feelings only with a friend.

A friend is someone who will be there for you any time of night or day. It is someone who shares your joys and is truly for you. A person who will do anything just to see you happy. The life we lead often turns to heartbreak and that is when a friend offers support and affection. They will comfort you and feel your pain. They will never let you down.

Trust and honesty is important in a friendship. When you tell something important to a friend you will be safe there. A friend will always be honest no matter what the cost. Lies and dishonesty can ruin a friendship. Without honesty and trust a friendship cannot survive.

I'm very glad and thankful that I have a true friend. Her name is Astrid and she is always there for me. She is the only person I can say that I trust with my whole heart. She is understanding and caring. The bad times that we've been through did not destroy but only made our friendship stronger. She is a real treasure and I love her.

When you have a true friend you will know it because they will always be there, not to judge but to listen and help. You wake up each morning feeling stronger because you know no matter what life throws your way a friend will be there to share your emotions.

So, if you have a true friend, hold on to that person and never let go. Show them how much you care and always be there. Then, you can also be a true friend.

Emily wrote:

To me a friend is someone you can depend on in time of need. A friend is someone who you share your joy and sorrows with. A friend is always there to lend a hand or give a shoulder you can cry on. A friend means all those things to me, because I will do the same for a friend. I have or had A lot of friends. I ways had a soft spot for My friends. I used to go out of my way just to please them. If they asked me to do something for them I would make sure I do it properly. I always believed that if you do something, you do it right and you give your best or you don't do it at all. My friends always deserved the best. I was always there for them when they needed a friend. I also thought the world of my friends, because I thought that if I give them my best that they would do the same for me. That wasn't the way it worked at all.

I only recently discovered that my friends aren't my friends at all. I came to the stage when I needed a shoulder to cry on. I needed someone to talk to, but no-one was there for me. They let me down and I couldn't understand why. I didn't do anything to let them down why did they do it to me. Then and only them I opened my eyes and I realized that I didn't mean as much to them as they ment to me.

I said to myself that I was to good for them. They only took advantage of my soft spot that I had for them. So I decided to depend on the only real friend that I had left. A friend that I knew I could count on and a friend I knew who won't let me down. The only friend that I could speak openly about things and the only friend I had who I knew cares about me and loves me. I had turn to my boyfriend the only real friend I needed.

Places and Spaces that I like

Zena wrote:

I have two brothers who share one room. I like to be in their room because they are almost never there. The beds are comfortable and the room have everything like a t.v. and a radio. Sometimes I can be alone in the room to think. My older brother sometimes helps me in his room with my homework. There are posters of soccer players that makes the room more colourfull.

Lindi wrote:

I like being at school because I love being surrounded by my friends. Being alone in my bedroom is also something that I often do because I like spending time on my own. It helps me sort out all my feelings. It is also a place that I feel very safe and secure.

The beach is also one of my favourite places. I always feel relaxed there and it is also a very beautiful place. Sometimes its soothing just to sit and watch the beautiful blue water.

A Personal Experience

Karl wrote:

It always difficult for me to talk about myself, but I'll try as best as I can to tell you about something that I always wanted to tell someone.

It all started when my father became sick and we took him to the hospital and we later found out that he has cancer. My mother was always sad and I never perfectly understood why because I was a mere boy of six years and later when my father dies in hospital, everybody cried but me because I didn't fully understand the tragety of it all because no one really explained my father's death to me. My mother only told me that my father is going away to a better place named heaven and we will see again one day. So I was a bit sad and had a lot of questions that have no answers.

I was also confused and in grades dropped from an A to C's and D's and my teacher was puzzled because I was a very bright student and I didn't pay attention in class. My teacher brought my mom in and they talked and decided that I had a problem and they brought in a social worker. I was to attend some class where children had the same problem as mine but at what stage I didn't think I had a problem and I asked my mother why should I go to such a class because I wasn't mad, but she told me nicely that I must go because not because I'm mad but because I had some difficulty in accepting my father's death.

I went to regularly to the classes. I not only got most of the answers I was seeking but I accepted my father's death and my grades also started to go up again to A's.

I feel a lot better now that I have told my story to someone and I hope you can also tell a story that you have to someone. Thanks for listening.

Candice wrote:

Starting when I was standard 5. I had a very difficult time during school and I had difficulty at home.

At school I never normally understood how to do needlework and to do knitting, and when I'm at home my mother always forced me to do stitching. I used to pinch myself with the needle but my mother and teacher never understood. Why? In class I felt very hopeless because all the other girls work was very neath and they always seemed like that the work looks very easy to do. The teacher would only work with these girls who are very co-operative. She would always schole at me when I'm holding the needle wrong but she would never show me the write way. When I did something wrong

she would always send me to detention classes and turn my back to the class to sit in a corner lonely, and I was so ashamed because when the teacher saw something wrong I did then she'll always tell me that I'm disgusted and to my family and to the other girls in class.

But if only the teacher would have helped me, how to keep the needle and how to do the specific kind of stitch. Even is she only help me and stop hurting my feelings.

Then in the afternoon when I go home my teacher would always phone my mother and they are always talking about me how lazy I am and untidy. After the phone call my mother would always call me to raise her voice at me then I have to go to my room till the next morning because she say that she don't want to see my face and I would'nt get any food until the next morning. I would go to my room and cry all day because I'm always the one who's hopeless. But if only the teacher would have helped me, how to keep the needle and how to do the specific kind of stitch. Even if she only help me and stop hurting my feelings.

Zena wrote:

I would like to tell you a story that happened in real life. It didn't happen to me personally but to someone I knew. I do not want to use her name because she was embarrassed and disgusted of of what happened to her.

One day she went to the beach with some other friends but there were mainly white people. They found a lovely shady near a tree there was other people around them but suddenly they moved away. They didn't take any notice at that time so she and some of the girls went to take a swim while the boys put the stuff ready too eat. When they entered the people swimming they began to make fun of them they didn't know why. Then when she went to the toilet there was only one for the boys and one for the girls so she entered the toilet and saw girls looking in the mirror and laughing but when they saw her they stopped and looked at her, she went in the toilet and locked the door the suddenly they threw wet toilet paper at her and rubbish and shouting "We don't want your kind stinking and bringing germs to our toilets". The noise stopped so she opened the door to go out there was boys and girls in the toilet they pushed her against the wall and the girls put lipstick all around her face the boys ripping her clothes of the but not all the made fun of her she began to cry and ran out she told her friends. Her friends came to her rescue but they was more some of the white girls was impertinent and immoral then her friend spoke up and said "I feel sympathy and pity towards you this is the 90's and not the year of Apartheid you live in the old days why don't you go back to the past". The one that was insulted was confused and in shocked to see so much racism still in the country. It was after a while before her friends could calm her down.

Only the pooled list of words from the whole class for the news report is given here.

Narrative writing: Pooled words for a newspaper article.		
<u>Verbs</u>	<u>Adjectives</u>	<u>Nouns</u>
<i>evict</i>	<i>angry</i>	<i>eviction</i>
<i>force</i>	<i>tragic</i>	<i>tenant</i>
<i>assault</i>	<i>ludicrous</i>	<i>residents</i>
<i>pleading</i>	<i>furious</i>	<i>landlord</i>
<i>shelter</i>		<i>councilor</i>
		<i>mansion</i>

3.5.2 Assessment task and output

Learners were asked to reflect on the criteria they had found useful by answering the following questions and circling the appropriate answer:

REFLECTION OF THE USEFULNESS OF CRITERIA FOR PERSONAL WRITING			
I used the criteria	YES	SOMETIMES	NO
I found the criteria useful	YES	SOMETIMES	NO
I understood the criteria	YES	SOMETIMES	NO
I did not know what the teacher asked me to do	YES	SOMETIMES	NO

Learners mostly circled 'SOMETIMES' and occasionally 'NO'. Very few circled 'YES' for the last criteria. It seemed that a YES response was almost always circled for 'I found the criteria useful'.

Peer and group assessment output

For the news report the peer assessment comments were:

Zena's comments from her group were: 'make it more exciting' 'spelling' and 'clear writing'

Another learner noted in his assessment of Karl: 'it's as if I was there'

For Hedley the comment was: 'details not clear' as well as 'make it more exciting'.

Most learners just wrote: 'satisfactory' or 'not yet there'.

3.5.3 Observation and reflection of the writing process

I chose a news article as the first genre to be explored because of its every day familiarity. Learners assumed a spectator role and wrote a news report based on their literature. The pooling exercise was mainly for learners who had difficulty with this genre but as it turned out this was a very important exercise. Learners could see the word choices appropriate for a news article of this kind. It was clear from the pooled words that they

understood the requirements of this text type. The list of verbs, adjectives and nouns were very appropriate for the topic and genre. Learners found this extremely useful including the more confident learners. As in the previous pooling exercise I was cautious about not restricting learners or inhibiting their own work by providing them with the words. It was clear that many were writing and concentrating on the pooled words. I pointed out the usefulness of these words, that these were their own creation. A few learners simply ignored the pooled list while others used them extensively. The pooled words are strong and were meant to create sensation and excitement. Words such as 'furious' or 'ludicrous' verbs like 'force' or 'assault' are dramatic. It is meant to provoke anger in the reader and to stir emotions, typical of news reports. I thought this a good entry into genre writing.

The free writing task has value in easing and loosening up learners. It is writing, free of anxiety and fear of someone else's judgements. It helps learners discover themselves (Ponsot and Deen 1991; Whitehead 1971; Kirby et al, 1989). One learner said that she would prefer to do only free-writing! Whitehead (1971) cautions us not to allow free-writing to be just writing in isolation but to connect it with a follow-up writing exercise so that its value can be realised. I decided to start with personal and narrative writing.

Even though I chose the topic learners were allowed a certain amount of freedom to build on and interpret it in any way they wished. I encouraged learners to tell their own stories no matter how ordinary or mundane it might appear. I explained that the topic provided guidance.

Personal writing is inclusive; we all have stories to tell and experiences to relate. This was part of building their identities as writers and to develop a sense of voice. They would read their writing to others. In this way they would not just tell a story but hear their own voices. The first writing topic 'Places and Spaces that I like' was deliberately chosen because of the emotion attached to physical living places particularly in the case of adolescents (Wilkinson:1986).

Though no learners resisted telling their personal stories, I was prepared with alternatives if that happened. Learners should not be forced to speak about themselves. I had to make it clear to the class that personal experience does not necessarily mean that you personally experienced pain, experiences could be imaginatively recreated. Personal writing does not necessarily refer to painful experiences. Perhaps a criterion on humour would have helped. Wilkinson's advice in these situations is that an essential art of teaching is learning not to intervene, the teacher should be a trusting audience (1986).

3.5.4 Interpretation and reflection of assessment

The criteria that I gave were generic and established a link with the previous writing task while others were specific to the task.

Learners added both 'conventions' and 'creativity' criteria. I also thought the criteria that learners had generated were relatively perceptive and insightful. Learner generated criteria is an important step for understanding and establishing the standards of good writing and these standards should be added by both learners and teachers. This is also important for self-assessment and critical reflection on writing achievements. I wondered if building appropriate criteria meant they had understood that different types of writing needed different criteria. The last criterion, 'verb tenses', added by learners was particularly perceptive especially since ESL writers usually struggle with this. Perhaps learners had become more conscious of using the correct verb tense for a news report. A discussion of which tense to use followed and learners decided that one could speak using all three tenses in a single article depending on the event one is relating. For the second set of criteria, learners added emotions such as 'thoughts and feelings' and I thought this was also perceptive. The second criterion that they added was rather like a wish. That is, they would like to improve their vocabulary. I added this in exactly the way it was put because this was their wish.

It might be true that learner constructed criteria does not necessarily amount to understanding the skills and standards of good writing, learners might have understood that writing need not be a mystery and that it could be learnt. This unleashed their freedom to experiment and to become involved in the total process.

Peer and group assessment

Both self and group assessment created a real audience and context. One learner said 'It was as if I was there'. Most learners appeared to be enjoying peer assessment and writing comments on each other's work. There were animated discussions and disagreements, some of them out of control at times. Though at first learners were playful they later became astute critics, advice-givers, involved in a conversation. When audience becomes important, writing becomes real. As one learner put it: 'I can write and give it to somebody else to read and see if he can understand what I'm talking about'. Other responses to working in groups and doing assessment were:

'I found it enjoyable to read my writing out loud to the class'

'I could express my feelings more by talking and helping my friends in the group'

'To rely on my friends to tell me how am I doing in my writing, to make my paragraphs more exciting and interesting'.

However peer assessment can also produce stress and anxiety particularly when a class is not cohesive, when learners do not trust each other or when assessment is seen as a value judgement. One of these reasons might have operated between two groups. One group assessed another quite negatively. The negatively assessed groups retaliated emotionally and refused to accept the assessment. I wondered if the rejection of the assessment was a rejection of being assessed by learners that the negatively assessed group suspected had based their assessment on racial prejudices. These tensions were present in the class in varying degrees and it should not be surprising that when learners interact with each other on more serious and intimate levels that tensions would surface and lead to conflict. At this point it became crucial to put aside the programme and to concentrate on some of these classroom dynamics. I decided to have a discussion with the class on the purpose of assessment in the writing curriculum, which I tape-recorded. Their comments are interspersed in this and the following chapters where relevant (see for example Hedley's comment on his new vision of what an ornament could mean).

Learners also became engaged in defending a point or pointing out another's errors. I asked them to add one positive comment and one improvement comment. Some learners understood and responded immediately while others simply relied on my previous comments writing 'Good' or 'Satisfactory'. Clearly more conferencing had to go into explaining assessment and its purpose particularly self and group assessment. Learners were also not accustomed to be given this responsibility. They might have felt insecure to add their own comments. At the same time the teacher's familiar and oft repeated comments provide a stock from which to choose and learners could later improvise. I thought that this improvisation was exactly what teachers needed. The irony was of course that teachers themselves have used these comments over and over again. On the whole I believe this was a very powerful process as I could see many learners engaging with the assessment.

Assessment of personal/narrative writing

I shall now describe and critique learners' writings by comparing these with the explicit criteria provided for personal writing only.

Even though Zena's writing was rather ordinary, even dull and prosaic, she seemed to have used the criteria for paragraph writing effectively. Her first sentence is her main idea and the rest of her sentences supported this. She started by saying that her brothers have two rooms and the other sentences all relate to this main idea. She uses personal pronouns such as 'I' and 'My' and the reader knows this is her personal experience. Perhaps her dull style could partly be explained by her detached way of writing.

Lindi on the other hand did not stick to the conventions of paragraph writing for her first paragraph. Her first two sentences are two different ideas though the rest of her sentences follow from her second sentence for this paragraph. She uses words such as 'love', 'like' and 'sort out my feelings' and she 'feels safe and secure'. There is the sense of someone being there, there is movement in her writing, unlike Zena who detached herself from her subject. She has reflected on details of her home and coloured them with emotion as she described what attracted her to these places. The beach was 'beautiful' she 'feels relaxed' there and 'it is soothing just to sit and watch'. She explored her feelings while finding herself in the places that she liked. Even though there was nothing unique about her writing at this point, the importance lay in the process that was being built around producing it. This particular learner struggled with saying what she felt. I thought it was in this that the success lay. I thought that this gradual building would carry her through for more demanding writing tasks. Perhaps I should have asked for longer pieces because these writers had only just begun to explore their topics.

For the personal writing topic Karl expressed his feelings with phrases such as 'never perfectly understood' and says he 'had a lot of questions that have no answers'. He began his next paragraph with 'I was confused...', establishing a clear link with the previous one but one that would go on to describe his feelings. Later he described the kind of help he was given and ends by saying 'I feel a lot better now...'. Taking a look at the criteria, clearly this learner used voice very effectively and fulfilled the criterion of 'am I in my writing' admirably. His feelings were tangible. One could 'hear' this writer and feel for him. His essay moved logically from describing the situation that he found himself in to its end result (which luckily for him ended happily). One could of course argue that this was a mechanical prosecution of the criteria, but I thought that he had been able to put himself in his writing clearly.

Candice the shy, introverted girl wrote with emotion. Even though her experience could also be described as quite ordinary, she, like Karl, wrote with feeling, and this enhanced the quality of her writing. Candice also described her experiences and expressed her pain. Someone who might have had a similar experience with a teacher might be able to identify with her feelings of hurt and humiliation. She had a main sentence for each paragraph which showed structure and development. She used strong words to express her feelings such as 'disgusted'. Her plea was simply 'But if only the teacher would have helped me...!'

Emily's writing was clear and she expressed feelings that teenagers go through in their friendship formation. Her writing was quite ordinary and there was nothing original for this writing piece. Her writing style was simple, easy and honest. She like others wrote about a difficult time in her life and expressed her unhappiness of this. She moved easily from one paragraph to the next, each paragraph being reasonably self-contained.

The assessments for all the writing activities for this LO were holistically graded as well. For the first personal writing task I gave a letter grade with a comment. For the second personal writing task I gave only comments in margins as well as one overall general comment. I made notes in the margins for particularly for strengths and only pointing out any gross errors of language or spelling. For each writing task I gave a general comment at the end of the essay. For example my general comment for Karl: *'Your voice is strong and sincere and the personal feel of your writing comes through. I hope you keep writing'*, while for Candice my comment was: *'This is a well-written essay. I can tell it's written from personal experience'*.

Besides giving a grade or a numerical mark I also wrote comments along the margins and a final whole comment for papers. I gave credit when learners had used criteria and at the same time tried to keep an open mind for any new criteria. Part of building criteria was from learners' own writing. In this way criteria could be localised.

I realised that I had unintentionally given the impression that personal/life writing should be serious writing and self-confessional. Perhaps a criterion on humour such as 'I have told a funny or serious story would have made learners more aware of the humorous possibility of personal writing.

3.6 Learning Outcome 6: Critical Writing: register and purpose

...it made me want to write more often... -learner

3.6.1 Writing task and output

There were a number of writing tasks for this LO. All these were framed around issues that learners raised. Learners wrote one essay arguing either for or against state support to unwed teenage mothers. Another critical writing task was a letter of appeal in response to literature. Interpreting and relating themes and situations of literary text is a way for learners to demonstrate their writing abilities (Heath:1989:109). The last argument writing task was a letter to the editor of a newspaper arguing for or against the death penalty. All these tasks were supported by oral activities, mind-mapping, free writing, role playing and debate. Learners wrote rough drafts immediately after these activities. Sometimes criteria were introduced before, and at other times after a rough draft.

Criteria and checklist for writing an argument	YES	SOMETIMES	NO
My first paragraph clearly says what I believe			
My other paragraphs give more details about my beliefs			
I say what I feel			
My argument is strong enough to convince others			
I expressed facts about the topic			
I used logical connectors			
My argument makes sense when I read it out loud			

Criteria and checklist for writing an argument for the short story	YES	SOMETIMES	NO
My first paragraph clearly says what I believe			
My other paragraphs give more details			
I used events from the story to back up what I believe			
The reader can clearly understand the points I am making			
I write using lively verbs and colourful adjectives to make my meaning clearer			
It is clear that the person writing speaks with feeling			
Checked form and punctuation			

Criteria for writing a letter to the press

Main/topic sentence
 Other sentences give more detail
 Interesting opening
 Use strong language
 Arrange the points from strongest to weakest
 Must make sense to the reader
 Argument must persuade the reader

Critical Writing

Unwed teenage mothers who need state support

Karl wrote:

The child should not be supported by the state. The money should go to the upliftment of the community because if everybody is aware of teenage pregnancy then we will have less illegitimate children.

The father's parents should support and help with money and clothes and food, because it is their responsibility as his parents to support the child. She could have prevented it in the first place and there is a thing as an abortion. That money could have been used for education and the upliftment of the community.

Emily wrote:

Teenagers who are sexually active should prevent this from happening by having contraception. Why should people who work and don't have a baby support another man's baby while he is sitting at home on his butt or out there somewhere making babies? Why must somebody who has a large family support someone else's baby when he can hardly support his own family. Some mother's who get money from the state don't always use the money on the baby. They go to nite clubs, they buy alcohol or clothes for them and not the baby. The state should use the money on education so teenagers could be well educated about these things.

The mother should try and contact the father of the baby. She should make him pay or take legal action. If the state pays for other peoples babies then everybody is just going to have a baby and don't worry about where they are going to get the money. If the state pays for the illegitimate babies its going to be unfair to the taxpayers who sweats everyday.

I believe the taxpayer shouldn't be the one to pay for someone else's baby. The government should make the baby's father pay because he made a mistake and he should suffer the consequences.

Candice on teenage mothers:

The mother is still a child and how could she cope on raising a baby on her own and how she could be able to feed the baby without any money.

I believe that the state should not help or sponsor any money to this child. The reason why is that the state have to be responsible how they use the money of tax payers.

If the state sponser money then it would incourage other Girls to get pregnant because then they know that the state would help them raise the money. The state could help the public by building more schools in communities were there is no education.

Families may have trouble, they are struggling because they can't pay all their debts because their money is too little. If these families have to struggle then why can't she or any single mother struggle because it's her own problem.

Janice wrote:

We as citizens of South Africa should help these young teenage mothers. They need to know there are people who can help them.

A lot of our families are poor and can't afford to take care of their infants. They need the state's support in every way. Otherwise the state just has to suffer the problems of crime and stealing.

I think she has to be more responsible for her actions. She didn't expect her boyfriend to disappear without a trace. The state has to educate young people more about the consequences of having sex. The state needs to give these mothers the chance to prove themselves. They should not feel like an outcast because the state is there to help the unmarried mothers. Even though they made a mistake there is no need for us to reject them.

Hedley wrote:

The state must support grants. Why? Because there are some disabled people in our country, and they can't go out and look for work like those who go out and look for employment.

In cases where children get babies on high school, they should not get grants for their toddlers if their fathers have abandoned them.

First of all they should have thought about the consequences, what they are going to do if the babies' fathers don't support them any more.

Secondly they don't depend on other people's tax money. Because in a world like today, the country could have invested that money in other banks in other countries, and hopefully our country would have more advantages than disadvantages.

Thirdly the country could have invested that money for some time of another to upgrade cities and highways roads.

Last but not least they can't be trusted with other people's tax money. I think young people who get grants for their children that money must be taken away. Why? Because they are still young and can go out and look for employment somewhere. I think if the government doesn't do something about the matter, then children will get babies continuously and expect the state to support them with other people's tax money and that's not fair.

So I say no money to mothers with abandoned children. If we don't put a stop to it now we will never have the privilege to do it some time later.

Zena wrote:

I agree with people who are saying why should the tax payers pay for her child, it's not their responsibility, she made the mistake. Well why should she pay alone the consequences. It takes two to tango. While she tries everything to help the baby the father is enjoying himself. Why should he care, you must not blame her alone.

As humans with feelings we must help our fellow people in need. We are not just helping the mother to support her child we are helping the future because today's children are tomorrow's presidents, doctors, lawyers etc. To give them a good education so that they can become good, peaceful leaders one day.

By supporting the mother we are also preventing crime, maybe the mother is unemployed and she hasn't other ways of getting money and the only way is to steal or sell her body to give her child food.

to eat, clothes to wear and a roof over their heads. Why should the child suffer for the parent's mistakes?

Lindi's view:

I believe it was this lady's own choice to become a mother at such an early age. Her pregnancy could however have been avoided by using contraceptives. She was old enough to know about the dangers of having unprotected sex and now she must take responsibility for her actions.

If the state decided to support her the tax will be increases and this will be unfair to all tax payers. Workers will pay less because of supporting young mothers like herself. Tax payers have families too and some of them can hardly support their own families much less others. She is there-for not the responsibility of the state.

The girl must make the baby's father take responsibility and make him work for his child. State support will only encourage him (and alot of others)not to pay maintainance. This will only make it easier for him and he won't learn to be responsible .If the father finds himself a job he will become a more responsible person. The mother of his child will also not have to struggle anymore.

By giving state support it will be unfair to all taxpayers. The workers will pay less because of supporting illegitimate children. Workers have families too and it is already hard for them to support their own families, much less others. Low wages will be the result of giving state support.

By giving this girl money it will encourage other young mothers to go to welfare too. She must report the baby's father and make him pay maintainance. By doing this she will struggle on her own and he will never accept responsibility.

This letter was based on a short story set in S.A. during Apartheid. Learners had to write a letter persuading the main character to forgive his brother whom he had rejected. He rejected his brother because lived with a white, Christian woman and this was against his religious beliefs.

Letter of Appeal to Hadjji

Karl wrote:

Dear Hadjji

I write this letter to you to appeal to you to forgive your brother and give him his last dying wish which is do die in his home as a Muslim.

I can't tell you that I know how you feel because then it would be a lie, but what I can do is tell you that you have my deepest sympathy. I know you feel that you've been deserted and that he threw you aside and chose to go with Catherine and for ten years he didn't care about you. That he forgot you existed. But I want to tell you everybody in life needs a second chance and you are his. You must think back to the time you were youths and you had loved him so much during the days that you spent together at the Islamic institution.

I know you can find that love in your heart and forgive him Karim.

A concerned friend

Karl

Emily wrote:

Dear Hadjji

I'm writing this letter not to give you a lecture, but to point out a few reasons why you should grant Karriem his last wish.

I know it must be hard, but you are family. You have such beautiful childhood memories together. Don't let one mistake he made in his life keep you from doing the right Islamic thing. Karriem was born a Muslim, and he has every right to wish to be buried as one.

It doesn't matter that he did wrong in his life-time. You can't punish him for the things he did by ignoring his dying wish. It is not your job to judge other people. That's the Man Above's job. There's no sense in being stubborn.

Please do what's right. Put your anger aside and tell your brother how much you love him.

Your friend

Candice wrote:

Dear Hadjji Hassen

I write this letter just to help you in this situation you've put yourself in by ignoring your brother.

Three years ago I had a cousin, we were very close and suddenly she turned Muslim and at first I was very shocked and felt alone but still I was happy for her and her decision. I felt very upset because she betrayed our religion and if she really thinks that she have asked for forgiveness to God and that this is the path she wants to take in her life then who else but "God" can be angry?

My advice may not be to good for you to reconsider your thoughts but if only you could ask yourself a question like, why when everytime a Christian girl turns Muslim then it is fine and there maybe nothing wrong but just when a Muslim boy turns or wants to be Christian then its always a problem but do you know that a Christian girl's parents feel when they find out that their little girl wants to betray her religion just to satisfy needs of her boyfriends parents. So I hope you'll forgive your brother and leave him Gods hands.

Yours sincerely

Janice wrote:

Dear Hadjji Hassen

I'm writing to you as a concerned citizen. I feel angry and heartbroken because of what you have done towards Karriem. I know it's very hard for you to accept him back into your life.

You should forgive your brother for what he has done to you. The only reason I can think of about why he did leave you and his religion is because of apartheid. The only way he could escape is by leaving you. The fact that he married a white Christian woman makes things very harder, I know. You have just been on pilgrimage and Allah is very pleased by forgiveness. Think of all the exciting, good and sad times together in your youth. You must realise that this is Karriem's last and only wish. The fact that he asked you, makes you realise that he was thinking of you always.

I plea to you to make an effort to make his last wish come true. You will also feel good.

Yours sincerely

Hedley wrote:

Dear Hadjji Hassen

This is a letter from a concerned reader. I would like to appeal that you as an individual to go and listen to your brother's request to come and see him for the last time.

Mr Hassen won't you please consider to go. Karriem is hanging on the last bit of life. His longing before he dies, is to reunite with his family, but especially with his brother. You are a hadjji, forgiveness is one of the important things that pleases Allah. You as a Hadjji are supposed to know. Catherine as a positive person came to see you on this issue. She explained to you that the problems occurred with her, because it wasn't Kariem's intention to betray his family but hers.

So please Mr Hassen won't you please reconsider to go see your one and only brother that you have left. You have been given each and every fact, why your brother has left the family house.

Please respond to the fact that it wasn't your brother's idea to leave the house.

Yours sincerely

Zena wrote:

Dear Hajji

I am writing this letter to appeal to you to reconsider this ostracism of your brother Karriem. Catherine already asked you to forgive him. Now I am asking you.

He is your brother and he will always be your brother even when you or he are dead. The anger that you feel don't change the matter that he is your brother. Do you want Karriem to die unhappy that you can't forgive him that he can't die like a muslim. He didn't change his name nor his religion so why can't you forgive him. Just imagine that you are inlove truly inlove and that you can't be with that person because of your skin colour and religion that how he felt to choose between and his heart.

You went to Mecca so you are supposed to forgive and forget his sins.

A concerned friend

Lindi wrote:

Dear Hadjji

I'm writing on behalf of your brother to ask you to change your mind about visiting him. You are a highly respected person in our community and people look up to you. As a muslim you know how happy it makes Allah when we forgive our brothers. Therefore I think it is important that you reconsider visiting him. He is after all, still a Muslim.

I know that you felt betrayed Kariem embraced an environment which was alien to you so willingly. Karriem was young and inlove and I know that you can relate to what that felt like. He thought with his heart and maybe he was a little selfish but that was a very long time ago. Although alot of things have happened time cannot erase the fact that Karriem is your brother. Catherine told you that it was her fault and maybe she was the cause of Karriem's decision, after all you know how persuasive she can be.

Does your visit to Mecca not mean anything to you? As a very religious person you know it means to forgive and forget our brothers and sisters. While your brother lay dying with strangers at his side you only think of your own selfish needs. Does his last wish not mean anything to you? You havn't even spoken to him yet, how do you know what he feels? Mayby he regretted his decision since the first day he made it. Why else did he come back home? Karriem really loves you and your forgiveness

is very important to him. Although you feel anger towards him it does not change the fact that he is your brother and that you love him dearly. The fact that you are still disappointed in him after all this time only shows how much you still care. Do not think of visiting Kariem as being soft or weak. Think of it as making your community and friends proud of you because if you do go, everyone will think of you as a brave man who can forgive and forget

Please do not ignore my plea Hadjji, as it will be a decision which will affect the rest of your life. If you go to Kariem and make peace with him before he dies, at least you can sleep well at night knowing that you have pleased not only Kariem but also your master. If you do not wish to see him and he dies, it will be on your consious. You must make your decision as soon as possible, as wasting too much time could be vital. I am very concerned about you and will pray for you.

Your brother

Letter to the press to resist or to reinstate the death penalty

Karl's letter:

Reinstate the Death Penalty

SA is one of the lands with the highest crime rate. Every two seconds a person is mugged, robbed or killed. How can a murderer or a rapist be released on bail? I think they should be punished according to their wrong doings.

Statistics show that in a land where there once was no death penalty, after it was reinstated the crime rate dramatically decreased. SA is a haven for opportunity for the criminals.

Too many lives are ruined by criminals. Criminals must learn crime does not pay.

Candice's letter:

Resist the Death Penalty

The death penalty is wrong and disgusting in God's eyes, because people's lives should only be lying in God's hands and not in anybody else's hands. As this is one of the commandments it would be wrong to take matters into your own hand and disobey the word of the Bible. Wouldn't it be wrong to take a life of a man who has a family and are the one who are able to bring in money. if you as a human being don't have the right to kill why is it that people of the state gets this nasty remark of taking a precious may be innocent life?

There's been many times when grieving people have to loose a very close relative or friend to the state, and like you are trying so hard to get away from this grieving when you find out that your victim is one of your closest relatives. Even there's no evidence against the victim in some cases it is like harsh, you'll never come over it because the state has taken your closest friend away and how cruel and horrifying that would be.

Janice's letter:

Reinstate the death Penalty

I'm a very concerned citizen. I feel I can't sit back and watch how criminals are destroying our country and lives. if the death penalty is reinstated criminals will start to fear the law.

It's been too long that criminals have been ruling the county with a strong hand. When the new government is chosen they will make sure the death penalty is reinstated. Then we can make a good and just example of these people who think nothing of their helpless victims. Times are hard but that doesn't give you the right to commit these violent acts of crime. Families are being destroyed in this proses, because criminals go off with lith sentences. Lifes of these victims can't continue, because they don't even believe in the justice system anymore. people's trust is being destroyed bit-by-bit.

The crime rate will drop tremendously and people will feel safer knowing that the system will work for them.

I hope my opinion will make a great difference. I feel very strongly about this subject.

Hedley's letter:
Resist the Death Penalty

It is totally abnormal for people to approve of the death penalty.

The death penalty is state out of hatred. Do you as a reader hate your family, friends etc. that much that you want to kill? It is disgusting for people who want to reinstate the death penalty. They are totally like animals.

Do you think that one or a couple of people should hold your life in their hands? No. One person don't have the right to kill the other. in the Bible it states that "thou shalt not kill" the six commandments in the bible. So if you kill you are an animal and must be distanced from people who have feelings for others, you are living in lawlessness.

People if you reinstate the death penalty think of how would you feel if people had to decide on your fathers, sons.

Zena's letter:
Reinstate the Death Penalty

I am disgusted of how high the crime rate is in this land. Someone must do something. The Crime rate will drive out all the good and loyal citizens and leave only the criminals to rule the land.

All I can think about is to bring back the death penalty that is the only solution. Too many lives are ruined by criminals. They are pampered living in luxury in jail while the victims get no compassion from the state. I believe if the criminals knew about the death penalty they will stop crime and the crime level will drop.

I believe the injection will do good a quick death with no pain. Death penalty is the only way to let the criminals know that crime does not pay.

Lindi's letter:
Reinstate the Death Penalty

I definitely approve of the death penalty. My reasons are simple. If you rape, murder and molest you have no respect for human lives. What right do you therefore have to live? Too many lives get ruined and too little are done about it.

The reason why our crime rate is so high because criminals know that they wont be punished harshly and that is why they keep on committing these hidious crimes. Criminals are not scared of prisons, as they know their 'good behaviour' in prison will lesson their sentences. Jails in South Africa are too full as it is and these prisoners that face 20-25 years only waste the tax-payers money. Victims of crimes get no compassion and criminals get pampered.

According to statistics, a woman is raped every second. That means that a quarter of the men in this country should be in jail. Where are these people who committed these crimes? They are roaming the streets in search of new victims. This is the reason many people don't even bother to report crime anymore.

Crime ruins too many lives. Communities live in fear which is unfair and wrong. If this is the new South Africa, what chance do our children have to survive?

That is why we should demand the death penalty back. It may be our only answer to a safer, happier community.

Emily was absent for this writing task.

3.6.2 Assessment task and output

Learners were given a number of self assessment options to choose from or they could use their own if the options did not suit their writing.

Assessment options given to learners for all their writings:

EXCELLENT
GOOD
SATISFACTORY
GETTING THERE
NOT YET THERE

Self assessment for the writing task on the letter to the press concerning the death penalty

The descriptors were excellent, good, satisfactory, getting there and not yet there.

Karl assessed his work as GOOD
Emily assessed herself as EXCELLENT
Candice wrote SATISFACTORY
Janice wrote SATISFACTORY
Hedley wrote SATISFACTORY
Zena assessed herself as EXCELLENT
Lindi wrote GOOD

Learners' interpretation of the descriptors

When asked their interpretation of these descriptors, most learners appreciated its more positive aspects. The responses below were taken from a recording and from Reflection Questionnaires (Appendix C).

Candice felt '*...it was an inspiration...*'

Karl said that it '*Doesn't tell you that you are bad but that you are getting there...*'

Hedley commented '*I've really improved. What I mean with it is that my writing has improved a great deal. I'm positive about my writing. I think there is room for improvement*'.

Zena pointed out that *'The assessment helped me a lot. It gave me ideas on writing. It helped me to exercise my brain and my mind. It improved my sentences and paragraphs'*.

Janice also felt *'...I can really see how my writing has improved. Even in the exams I can see the results. I've got a good mark for my writing and the assessment has shown me there's room for improvement...there's no negativity involved in this assessment'*.

Others said:

'When the teacher usually marks your work they say good or bad. That bad really lets you feel negative when you get your page back. But now it simply says 'not yet', there which makes you feel that there is a chance of improvement'.

'...it gives you inspiration to do better on our new topic...'

'It's a great way of letting someone feel proud of his/her work. Because no one wants to hear negative stuff of their writing'.

3.6.3 Observation and reflection of writing

Mind-mapping, talking and role-playing happened simultaneously for all the writing tasks. There was animated and vehement disagreement as learners became very personally involved with the topics. Whitehead says that talking makes the child see that he has an *'...ample stock of ideas and experiences bearing up on the topic in hand'*. Janice said the topic *'made me think'* while Hedley said it made him ask *'why?'*. Groups were excitedly getting their ideas down on large sheets of paper. Some were doing this rather haphazardly and I assisted those who *'did not know what to do'*. After about fifteen minutes of talking and mapping learners managed to write a first draft. The writing outputs should be seen as works in progress.

3.6.4 Interpretation and reflection of assessment

I had intended introducing the criteria before a first draft but judging by the intensity of the debate I decided to let learners write a first draft before introducing criteria. There should never be rigidity about when exactly to introduce criteria. The only determinant should be the readiness of learners. In addition I felt that many of the criteria for argument were new and introducing another new item would interrupt their eagerness to put down ideas. I showed learners the criteria after the first draft. Some did revision on this draft. I stepped back totally for this mainly because I wanted learners to first grapple with the

newness of criteria for argument. I also wanted learners to engage with the criteria first, only offering help when specifically asked.

I assessed the essay on the topic of teenage mothers with the following ASSESSMENT OF WRITING ARGUMENT below. I also assessed the letter to the press using only two criteria, language and content and arrived at a single descriptor. Similarly for last argument writing on the death penalty, I assessed learners on the criteria they were strongest on and the one they were weakest on. I assigned one holistic descriptor for this writing.

ASSESSMENT OF WRITING ARGUMENT

Topic: Should unwed teenage mothers get state support?

IDEAS:

Have you expressed a number of different ideas.

Have you said how you feel about each idea?

Can the reader clearly understand your ideas?

Are your ideas interesting and different?

VOICE:

Is it clear that your feelings are yours

Have you put something of yourself in the essay?

PUNCTUATION AND PARAGRAPHING

Did you start each idea with a new paragraph?

Did you check full stops and spelling?

PURPOSE:

Did you answer the question well?

HERE IS WHAT THE SCORES MEAN

Score of 1: Your writing is still in the searching stage where you are still looking for a way to get started

Score of 2: You are starting to show that you understand what to do

Score of 3: Your writing clearly shows that you understand what to do but you still have to work on this

Score of 4: Your writing is strong on this

Score of 5: You are in control of this and should continue to strengthen this

(adapted from Oregon Statewide Writing Assessment Student Writer's Report:1994)

Holistic Descriptors for Letter of appeal and Letter to the press EXCELLENT GOOD SATISFACTORY GETTING THERE NOT YET THERE
--

(adapted from Spandel and Culham: 1994)

Assessment of argument

For the topic on unwed mothers learners' writing showed a very loose structure and organisation typical of first drafts. Their first sentences moved straight into their positions and assumed the reader was aware of their argument. Assumptions are a major feature of argument and this is typical of all the arguments in this writing output (Andrews:1995:165). For instance in her first sentence Emily wrote '...should prevent this from happening'. She assumed the reader knew what she meant by 'this'. Janice also used the word 'these' but did not specify who 'these' specific teenagers might have been. Similarly, Zena assumed a moral tone and said 'she made the mistake' but does not specify what the mistake was. The three rhetorical questions asked by Zena and the two asked by Emily were typical of questions they might have asked each other in their debate. It appeared that learners transferred the speaking mode to the writing mode. Whitehead calls this style of writing, 'babbling' and 'chattering', both preliminary to writing and revising (1971:160). Perhaps I should have more of an impression on developing a sense of audience and as Whitehead put it, 'to shape and direct the movement of his thought and pen' (1971:167).

Karl's argument could have benefited if he had seen the lack of logic in his second sentence. His paragraph was short and he did not give himself the opportunity of applying all the criteria for this writing. Emily made a statement and offered a solution for her first sentence in her first paragraph. Her last sentence of this paragraph closed off the paragraph though none of the other sentences fitted in here. In fact all three sentences fitted in with the final paragraph. Her second paragraph showed cohesion. Candice's argument lacked logic and structure and appeared to be a rough draft. Her use of non-standard English was obvious (What is so disgusting is that how the babies must take all the actions and conscience of their mothers acts). Janice's third paragraph pointed to important issues but she does not develop these ideas. She pointed to education, the teenagers' responsibility and the father's disappearance. Lindi's argument does have logic and a sense of audience though she tended to repeat the same idea too often. Zena undermined her position with her last paragraph. She started off disagreeing with giving the mother support and changed her mind in the last

paragraph as she possibly realised the consequences of her position. Her opening and her second paragraph read like random thoughts. There was no sense of commitment to her argument. The sequencing of her argument needed work and it appeared as though she simply ignored all the criteria for writing argument. It appeared that her sense of audience was absent.

However I thought learners' ideas fairly good, though these were submerged below poor style and organisation. Once more the importance of using logical connectors and the logical development of argument were highlighted here. There was some training in this for personal/narrative writing where sequencing and logical order was brought into focus.

In addition to the criterion referenced assessment I also wrote some of these comments on learners' pages.

- I noticed you said a lot of important things and I would like some more information on why you think that giving money will lead to crime.

-I like these ideas but don't agree with them - convince me some more.

-Yes I think so too but why do you think this is the case?

A closer look at the actual writing showed very little application of the criteria. Either the criteria were too complex, too new or the point of introduction was inappropriate, or I should have been more directional. Perhaps the fault lay with mind-maps and learners had transferred the different branches as isolated sentences in paragraphs without developing each separately. An ideal situation could have been for learners to use the criteria given as a benchmark and to use this as a base to develop others themselves. All these writings obtained the lowest score for voice and purpose while ideas got the higher score.

My assessment was inadequate and problematic for these particular writings. For instance the sub-criteria for Ideas 'Can the reader clearly understand your ideas' should actually be placed with organisation. However there was no criterion for 'organisation'. It was difficult to give ideas a single score. I decided to give all learners the 'Getting There' descriptor and told learners to use the assessment for their following writing tasks.

I did not tell learners that their assessments were unrealistic. Rather I hoped they would see this when they compared their assessments with mine and we could enter into a dialogue. This however did not happen for a number of external reasons too lengthy to go into here. My perception was that they did not only assess their writing but included their enjoyment of the topic as part of their assessment and this could have contributed to the inflated assessment

It appeared that learners wrote with more ease for the letter of appeal. I shall only limit the assessment of this writing task to a few learners.

Karl's letter had some good ideas. For instance he followed the criteria of using strong language in his first paragraph and added emotion to his argument. The conventions of writing were not a big problem for this learner. He knew when to end sentences, uses commas and other punctuation forms correctly most of the time.

Candice's awkwardness was enhanced for her argument writing, though her message for her letter of appeal was not lost. In this letter she gave an example of her own experience to back up her argument. Her empathy makes the receiver more amenable to her arguments. However she did not show this in her other critical writing.

Janice used persuasive techniques by showing empathy, and then offering advice gently. Her paragraphs showed a logical progression. However she mixed her sentences within paragraphs. She spoke with feeling but her writing had the voice of someone weighing things up carefully. This made her lapse into generalities and made her appear hesitant.

Lindi's letter of appeal was rambling and her thoughts rather haphazardly organised. She showed that she could identify with the character's sorrow. She scored 'Satisfactory' for her literature-based letter.

Karl's letter on the death penalty was short and cryptic. His arguments were one off sentences or ideas all piled together in a single paragraph. His ideas were basic and he did not give details to support these ideas. Thus his argument failed to persuade the reader in any convincing way though his points he listed did make sense. His argument in any case was too short for it to be compared against any meaningful attempt at using the criteria. One gets the feeling that he was not interested or motivated. His writing seemed uninvolved and distanced from the topic and the audience. I would have expected this learner, who was more accomplished for his personal writing tasks, to write more easily and with more confidence for his argument. However this relationship did not exist. He scored 'Getting There'.

Emily, like Janice, Zena and Hedley wrote in the oral mode for this letter. None of her thoughts were fleshed out and considerable work still has to go into making this writer see the value of arguing and not just flipping off points. All her points were randomly presented. She scored 'Not Yet There' for the two last argument writing tasks.

Janice's position on the death penalty was clearly stated in her opening paragraph. In her second paragraph she gave her reasons for her position though she did not arrange her points from the strongest to the weakest. She did attempt to use 'strong' language throughout her main paragraph such as 'ruling'; 'helpless victims'; 'doesn't give you the right to commit

these violent acts' and 'destroyed'. Her letter does have a theme and thus speaks to the reader. She scored 'Satisfactory'.

Hedley was too flamboyant, too emotive and lacked a clear sense of direction. His ideas again like his other writings were too loose and uncontrolled. There was no real lead and no real conclusion to the points he made. Perhaps he should have concentrated more than the other learners on criteria for 'organisation' and 'audience'. It was hard to get a grip on his main point or argument. He asked too many questions but gave no solutions. He scored 'Not Yet There' for his letter.

Zena's argument on the death penalty had a strong opening when she used the word 'disgusting'. Her second paragraph was logical and she managed to sustain a position. Her argument was logical but would have had more effect if it had been better organised. She scored 'Satisfactory'.

Lindi's letter to the press was the most convincing, the most focused and the one with the most facts and feelings to back up her facts. Her letter was also the longest so she was able to use most of the criteria effectively. Her opening is simple yet powerful. She gave statistics and supported them with facts. Her last paragraph ended pithily and rounded off her argument satisfactorily. She scored 'Good' for this letter to the press.

3.7 Learning Outcome 7: Imaginative Writing: register and style

Unfortunately the programme had to be discontinued to prepare for the end of year examinations.

CHAPTER 4

**THE THEORY AND PRACTICE DYNAMIC
OF THE WRITING -ASSESSMENT PROGRAMME**

In chapter 2 a literature review of the development of writing and assessment was outlined. The implementation of the writing and assessment parallel was discussed and described in chapter 3. This chapter examines and attempts to integrate these two chapters and makes the theory-practice link clearer.

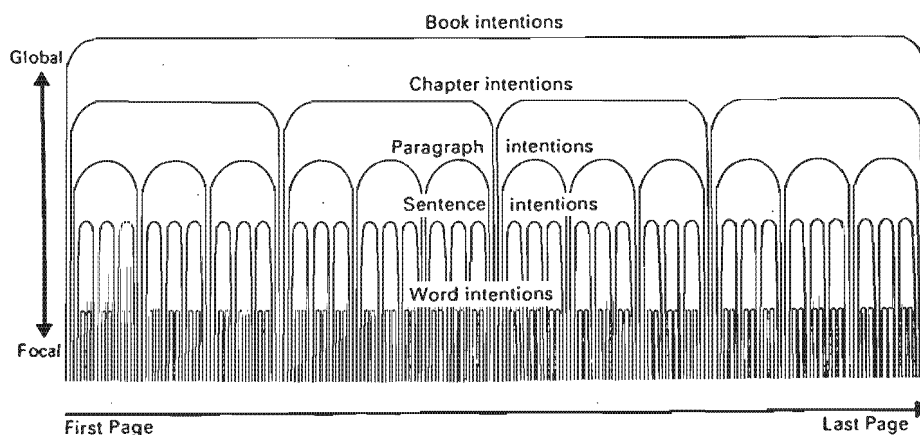
4.1 Focus 1: Basic Writing Skills: LO1-LO3

Focus 1 makes the theory-practice link of teaching the basic writing skills and the forms of assessment that are most congruent to them.

4.1.1 Writing words/phrases to sentences to paragraphs

The principle guiding the first three Learning Outcomes (LOs) was adapted from the 'Layers of intention in writing a book' by Frank Smith (1982:89) represented as Figure 2.

Figure 2: *Layers of intention in writing a book*



The first three layers of intention correspond with the first three LOs. So that Learning Outcome 1: Building Vocabulary: Words/phrases corresponds with Word intentions. Learning Outcome 2: Making sentences corresponds with Sentence intentions; while Learning Outcome 3: Paragraph Writing corresponds with Paragraph intentions. In this way a 'cascading' effect is created. For Smith the global intention arises first, which is writing a book. All other intentions flow from this. The principles of this focus work in a similar way as Smith's model. The local intentions, words/phrases and building sentences, flow from the global intention that is paragraph writing.

Another approach that is congruent with the one I used, is the Cognitive Approach of Bereiter and Scardomalia (Peacock: 1986:18). This approach actually reconciles two other approaches, the sub-skills and the holistic approach (such as the one put forward by Smith above). The sub-skills approach breaks writing into its constituent parts which could be taught separately as skills. The holistic model approaches writing as a total act, where nothing can be broken down or taught in isolation. The Cognitive Approach recognises that sub-skills can be identified and taught separately. However these sub-skills should eventually join in a communicative context such as a classroom. This programme was similar in the following way. The global intention was teaching paragraph writing through first identifying the sub skills while working towards a total and holistic approach of paragraph writing.

- The motive for starting with words/phrases was for learners to develop confidence in an unstressful manner, to pay attention to their writing (Ponsot and Deen: 1991) while at the same time acting as a language focus. Willis informs us that

It is nearly always lack of vocabulary that prevents us from understanding. A stock of well-chosen formulaic phrases and sentence stems can help the writer. (1996:118)

By giving learners objects and artifacts I had hoped to create a natural learning environment as well as to stimulate vocabulary and word building.

Willis says about language teaching that 'One of the biggest problems in the classroom is finding a meaningful context to illustrate samples of the language' (1996:114). I had used logical connectors, simple and complex sentences and sentence variation in a decontextualised way (by making up sentences). But the context was clarified by its connection with teaching logical connectors even though

these were practised on isolated sentences. One learner said after learning how to join sentences with the provided connectors: *'I feel so great because...during the years it was very difficult for me to join sentences. So now I will be able to.'*

When writers write there has to be encouragement, some outside interference, a jolt to animate the mind or an imaginative leap by the teacher (Emig: 1971; Ponsot and Deen: 1991; Smith: 1982; Whitehead: 1971). The ideal that Whitehead proposes of giving the writer the actual experience before starting to write, though not always possible, could be simulated in the confines of the real classroom. By providing learners with prompts such as artifacts for LO1 learners responded with words/phrases.

Argument, debate, conversation, free writing and mind mapping also provided support and preparation for writing activities. Process theorists have repeatedly emphasised the role that prior preparation plays in writing. Referring to the history of teaching writing during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Heath tells a fascinating tale of the 'groundwork' conversation played in the 'craft of writing'. Furthermore, Heath makes the point that 'Talk provided instant challenge and highly motivated opportunity for expressing one's own ideas and experiences...' (1989:109-13). For Peacock (1986) skills can only be effectively taught when the context is real, supportive and directed to a specific aim. Smith believes that writing cannot be taught in the sense of giving children 'explicit rules and exercises' (1982:199). Techniques and conventions could be taught and should provide the required help but only in the context of other external dynamics. He says

If conventions and techniques are presented at the wrong time, when they are irrelevant or confusing to the child, then any effort to teach and learn is completely wasted. But if the child is involved in doing something-if there is demonstration, engagement, and sensitivity-then the learning takes care of itself

(1982:198)

Thus Smith (1982), Peacock (1986) and Emig (1990) identify context as being the most important determinant of whether a child will learn to write or not. This context should be supportive. I hoped to provide a supportive and an enabling environment to build the confidence of developing writers.

Writing is not just an expression of what thoughts the writer has but is intimately bound up with feelings. Wilkinson puts it this way: '...language is intimately bound up with the human capacity for thought and feeling... Writing is not

just communicative; it is thinking and feeling, and learning to think and feel' (1986:187). It is a way of 'creation' and 're-creation of the self', with the self and in communication with others (1986:2). Learners in this programme echoed his words by saying: '*...my writing...made me think, see and feel...the teacher gave me ideas...The one that I found enjoy(ing)was to ask myself Why?'*

Willis (1996) talks about classrooms as learning environments. Traditionally the teacher is the one who initiates a topic and controls turn-taking. The teacher also directs the discussion and evaluates responses. This teaching methodology has been severely criticised. The remedy that is often offered is for the teacher to give up all control. However, a more moderate approach is where the teacher gradually relinquishes control as learners develop the confidence to generate the topic and direct the discussions. Butler and Bentley (1997) puts the whole business of who should be in control of the writing process eloquently:

It is important then, that teachers be leaders, not dictators...Our example is the best way to demonstrate to students how writers take risks, trying out new ideas that may or may not succeed. Through our example, we show students the intrinsic messiness of writing - the hesitations and false starts, the crossings out and fresh beginnings that enable both beginners and skilled writers to discover the best form of expression for their ideas.

(Butler and Bentley: 1997:7)

Willis agrees with these views and says that the resulting interaction of such an approach is richer and results in more learning (1996:18). Mentkowski makes similar points in defining the role of the teacher. He defines it as 'standing in' that is when one is doing the teaching, the advising for the later activity of 'standing by' with the teacher gradually relinquishing responsibility and control and moves gradually to stand 'beside the activity, observing and supporting it' (in Alverno: 1994:5). The last role of the teacher is to 'stand aside' where the teacher moves away to a more distant position and only participates in the assessment activity.

The teacher plays a crucial role in creating an environment, a context for learners to express their thoughts and feelings (Smith: 1982; Emig: 1971). The role of the writer is to write from the experiences designed for them and from their own images. The writer focuses on what they are doing individually as well as drawing from the observations and imaginings of their peers (Ponsot and Deen: 1991). Group work is one way of interacting with peers. One learner in a group experienced this in

the following way: *'Group work can be fun...Working on your own can be fun as well'*. Another expressed less excitement and simply said: *'The group was okay'*.

Throughout this Focus, learners were concerned, even obsessed at times with spelling. The Bullock investigation and resulting report published in 1971 was initiated by just such a concern by the British public with the decline in English standards, particularly the standards for grammar and spelling (Heath: 1989). Bullock gives a few reasons for children's' difficulties with spelling. Among these he gives one rather imperceptive reason. He says: 'Poor spellers may have lower verbal intelligence'. They may have difficulty in their visual perception of words and then in recalling them through imagery' (Bullock: 1971:181). It seems to me that such ideas when translated into practice lower a child's self-esteem and confidence. The learner quoted earlier who said that she just left out words she couldn't spell was expressing her insecurity about making errors and being judged by these. These feelings of inadequacy could be reinforced if teachers were to seriously regard the opinions of Bullock's report. Many teachers in South Africa say that children's spelling has worsened since the days of the publication of the Bullock report. Many activities for the writing-assessment programme centered on building confidence in a number of different ways. For instance I tried not to focus on mistakes or to perpetually remind learners of errors. Instead learners were encouraged to make and to explore their errors. This must have had an effect because when learners were asked: 'What did you learn from these activities?' One said *'...not to be afraid of using big words...'* while another learnt *'...to improve my vocabulary...'* and *'...not to be afraid to use my vocabulary.'* *'I don't think I make such a lot of spelling mistakes as before'*.

4.1.2 Assessment from words to sentences to paragraphs

I used a model of assessment that matched the writing approach of this programme. The assessment was constructed as a process, criterion based and generic.

Clarke distinguishes between assessment for the teacher and for the learner.

For the former it means

the process in which we gather evidence, make inferences, draw conclusions and act on those conclusions' while for the latter it is a *'...conversation with the teacher about what has been learned and what is still unclear... a source of suggestions for actions (Clarke: nd: 3).*

In this programme the assessment was used as a learning tool for the learner and a diagnostic tool for the teacher. In this way I could examine learners' strengths and weaknesses as well as what should be retaught or done differently.

This kind of assessment also allowed for site interpretation because the assessment was based on the needs and context of the learner (Department of Education. Curriculum 2005. Implementing OBE - 2:Assesment: nd). Assessment became *localised and contextualised*. In this way teachers would not have to restrict themselves to a set syllabus irrespective of where their learners are. The context of the learner is the springboard and not only what the teacher regards as important or what a syllabus dictates (Huot: 1990).

Criterion-referenced assessment allowed general and specific conclusions to be drawn. When I assessed the writings of learners I mostly used a criterion-based model as opposed to a more holistic approach where a single mark or score is assigned. White (1994) discusses the difference between the two in the following way. Holistic scoring ranks learners and describes how learners performed in relation to each other. Criterion-referenced scoring gives details on how individuals performed on specific things that were taught. It is also diagnostic and the teacher can remediate. Modern day theorists regard mark-giving as reductionistic and archaic particularly with regard to a complex activity such as writing. In her concerns with the subjectivity of awarding marks, Shay discusses a scenario of wide variation between markers for essays at tertiary level. She points to '...the lack of consensus between markers' (1998a: 1). These experiences are not unfamiliar in schools and highlight the complexity of writing. It also points to the difficulty of a learner interpreting the marks. Criterion-referenced assessment should make it clear to the learner what they should pay attention to as well as their particular strengths.

Implicit in assessing LO1 is the perception that the learner should see this as their work and become involved with evaluating it, they should become the owners of their texts (Halden-Sullivan: 1996). It also emphasised the importance of working with others. Others could provide valuable insights and the message is that everyone has to gain.

Underpinning this assessment is the idea that writing is non-competitive. Learning is seen as a process. Undue stress is eliminated. The explicit message should be co-operation.

The experiences of learners to self and peer assessment were crucial at this point. This is what some of them said

'I can rely on my friends to tell me how am I doing.'
'...to be more responsible.'
'...discuss and writing and how to improve grammar and spelling ...and feel free to talk with my group.'

The following section follows the writing-assessment programme and looks at the last four LOs whose major focus is genre writing.

4.2 Focus 2: Genre: LO4-LO6

This focus makes the theory-practice link of genre writing. It makes clear the specific requirements for developing appropriate criteria for genre writing as well as assessment criteria for measuring progress.

The distinction between different writing modes is useful for separating and concentrating on different aspects of writing such as style, register and voice so that the complexities of genre writing can be clarified or as Andrews call it 'fitness for purpose' (1995:165).

4.2.1 Finding voice through personal and narrative writing

Personal writing here means writing that relates to life events and to imaginative experiences. Narrative writing means relating an incident or telling a story either from first hand observation or imaginatively.

The personal narrative has the power to promote a positive attitude towards writing, particularly in terms of personal engagement to the task, willingness to persevere and revise, and growing interest in and response to audience reaction. Hairston also believes that 'Writing is an act of discovery for both skilled and unskilled writers...it begins with discovery of the self '(in Butler and Bentley: 1997:7). Andrews agrees with this and further elaborates, 'Narrative paradigms operate to order and make sense of experience for us' (Andrews: 1995:39).

Personal writing is closely tied with personal identity and thus experience. By making sense of experience by beginning with the self, writers appear more committed to their writing. This in turn builds confidence and self-esteem. If this is so

then personal writing could possibly act as a springboard for other modes of writing. By finding out who we are and by starting with real experiences rather than objective reality, our voices become stronger. Confirming this, one learner said: '*...I also learned to express my feelings and to write what I really think and feel*'. For another it meant '*To put your thoughts and feelings into writing*' while another thought: '*To be confident (and to) improve*'.

Walsh wrote that the expository, descriptive and the discursive could only be achieved by 'gifted pupils' and that

story-writing' and 'personal' writing have come into particular prominence in recent years, probably because they have proved to be within the capacity of very large numbers of children.

(1969:115)

But recent research disproves this. Children do not necessarily first learn the dialogic mode and then go on to other writing modes. Nor is there any proof that the narrative mode is less demanding than other modes. Andrews reported his students as saying that sequencing and 'getting started' in narrative mode was far more difficult than in argument (1995:107). Some theorists believe that the division between the narrative and the personal mode is artificial. Andrews provides us with a complicated argument of how this difference is in fact artificial because in writing one text-type mixes with another. No text-type can be called pure.

Another motive for first starting with narrative and then moving to argument was influenced by the criteria for the narrative/personal mode seemed to flow more naturally from previous LOs than do the criteria for argument. A consequence of this would be a more cohesive and natural development of style, voice and register for argument writing.

4.2.2 Register and purpose in critical writing

For the purposes of this discussion critical writing covers a broad discourse type. The discourse type that will be clarified here is argument writing. I shall take the definition of argument to mean what Andrews suggests, namely, that it can include the exploration of an idea to a written statement of a position.

The function of argument is to

- clarify
- persuade
- win
- entertain
- unload
- resolve
- find identity

(Andrews: 1995:150)

For this study argument was used for all these reasons. Learners started with the narrative and personal modes that would presumably increase confidence and heighten self-esteem. This was encapsulated in 'finding voice' and the last function in the above list 'find identity' is an extension of this criterion. This would prepare them for a more demanding discourse type such as argument. Clearly the demands such as to persuade is more complex than narrating an observation or telling about a personal experience.

When analyzing his own students' work, Andrews found that there were no grounds for the belief that narrative writing could provide the foundation for argumentative (1995). He says that this structure is rather in the mind of the reader.

However when I analysed my learners writing I found that structure, organisation and voice deteriorated as the writers struggled to communicate their message. Wilkinson (1980) says that it appears that when new skills are acquired, old ones get lost temporarily. The skills for paragraph writing were different than for the other LOs. For genre writing, the writing skills required increased in difficulty. Andrews believes that paragraphing in argument was different for more conventional paragraphing structure. He found that there was no '...absolute correspondence between paragraphing and argument structure' (1995:104). It is possible that learners in this study found the skills for argument writing more difficult to cope with than for the other LOs. New skills require considerable support and instruction. This support can also be given by positive feedback. Ponsot and Deen say that all adverse criticism should be banned because it makes for competition and stress (1991:52; Elbow: 1997). Support should also be given with clearly defined and workshopped criteria. The criteria should be crystal clear for register and purpose. If the function of the argument was to persuade, such criteria should be included. If it were to lay out a point of view then this would require some other criteria besides the generic ones.

The emphases on structure and organisation highlight the product-process link of writing. Arndt exemplifies this by saying that the area of learning the 'conventions of genre, coherence and formality at discourse level... may be the area where L2 learners need most guidance' (1987: 115-116). The context of this is the neglect of process approaches to the products of writing. When good ideas are not organised they can get completely lost. Writing that is organised and structured with correct punctuation, but devoid of original ideas can be boring, 'formulaic and result in restricted performance' (Wiggins: 1994:1).

If part of the functions and reason for teaching the narrative/personal mode is to discover identity (Butler and Bentley: 1997), then for Andrews teaching argument is essential in any democracy because it allows people to operate in larger structures. He suggests that we must move beyond telling our stories and experiences to entering debate. Those who deny children the right to learn argument in writing are denying them their democratic rights and such governments are pleased when children are only allowed to tell their own stories and to tell what they are familiar with (1995:155-56). This statement is particularly interesting for South Africans where the vast majority of learners are ESL and the syllabus for teaching writing does not encourage writing in the argumentative mode.

4.2.3 Assessment of Focus 2

As learners moved to independence they move to setting the standards and goals of writing. This was where real growth started. A step towards this profound movement was when learners created criteria themselves. I placed myself as their guide. Learners could see what the expectations were even though they sometimes copied what I had said.

Shalem and Slominsky question the authority of who sets standards and the benchmarks used in setting these standards. They argue that

it is not enough that criteria be associated with respectable authority, they have to be agreed upon. We can only use criteria if we feel that 'these are my/our criteria'

(1998:5).

Developing criteria with learners takes up time, energy and a few resources such as an OHP or a word processor, though these are not essential. But this is the

initial phase and as criteria become internalized for learners the resources and energy and time can be placed somewhere else. Once learners had learnt generic criteria, other criteria related to the genre and mode of discourse could be concentrated on. For instance the criterion that each 'Paragraph starts with a main idea and the rest of the sentences give support and more detail' was excluded for the personal writing task because learners should have learnt this after a number of writing tasks.

4.2.4 Assessing the personal/narrative

The criterion 'is my writing creative' begs the question of how creativity will be assessed or whether creativity could be a criterion? Wiggins (1995) thinks that creativity could be a criterion. He suggests we go about this in the following way:

If we agree that this pile of work over here is more creative than all the other piles of work we have, then through hard analytical work we should be able to describe what it is that makes the work creative. I might go so far as to say that if we value it and recognize it when we see it, then we can assess the work with adequate precision.

(1994:6)

He insists that criteria be not only about form and organisation of writing. A writer can meet all these and still produce uninteresting writing. He says

For example some writing rubrics assess organisation, mechanics, accuracy and appropriateness to topic in judging analytical essays. These criteria are necessary, but perhaps not sufficient. They don't get to the heart of the purpose of writing-achieving some effect or impact on the reader. A writer can meet these form-related or process-related criteria but still produce bland, uninteresting writing. Thus they cannot be the best set of criteria or dimensions. We should look for things like insight, novelty, clarity.

(1994:6)

Following on setting criteria for creativity, Greene believes that it is through the imagination that the individual can make sense of his personal experience and language is the medium through which these experiences are articulated (1970:313). If this is so then the imagination can be cultivated by the teacher and expressed as skills and skills can be taught.

White (1994) a proponent of holistic assessment believes that writing cannot be divided into parts because writing is a total act. It is unreliable to break down

writing into various parts because teachers do not in fact agree on what exactly these parts are or on their importance.

Teachers have found it difficult to assess personal writing and having to assign marks or letter grades increases this difficulty. How can we give marks to personal experiences? However the demands of the school system took me out of this dilemma. Learners needed a mark as part of their final pass or fail. Butler and Bentley (1997) say that the problem is not insurmountable and that one can assign marks provided the marks are based on what has been learnt as a result of previous efforts. In addition to marks, I also wrote comments on learners' pages. It was important for learners to understand how their marks were arrived at.

Wilkinson (1986) says that impression markers far from engaging the reflective writing encourage more unreality as the writer tries to refine their writing for the teacher-marker. When the writer writes for a teacher and a mark, writing becomes formulaic, commitment and quality are compromised and the worst scenario is when learners stop caring (even about passing!). Butler and Bentley (1997) think that teachers' corrections do not necessarily improve writing.

In order to obviate the difficulty of grading personal writing, I decided to take Elbow's advice and value all writing no matter how bad. I made no negative comments but instead pointed out weaknesses and made suggestions for improvements.

Alternative assessment approaches use multiple assessment strategies. Because the role of the teacher vis-à-vis the learner has changed and the learning environment is more democratic, assessment approaches should reflect these changes. This is intrinsic to an alternative approach since the teacher does not command the learning environment. Learners take responsibility for their own learning. There is nothing more important than taking responsibility for assessing yourself. If assessment is to be embedded in the learning cycle then learners must be involved with assessing themselves.

While the literature suggests several assessment strategies that would be in keeping with an alternative approach, this study has only used peer, self and teacher assessment strategies. For this programme the self and peer assessment techniques were deliberately kept simple and easy to use. Blanche and Merino (1989) say that self-appraisal exercises are likely to increase the motivation of the language learner and that people assess themselves quite accurately given the right conditions. Boud

(1995) believes that self assessment involves learners in determining what is good work and not to involve learners in establishing criteria for good work is to distance them from participation in their own learning. Assessment should not just be about 'giving' marks or symbols because then little is gained. However when this is done in conjunction with other assessment activities such as comments from peers then it has more value. In this study I did not intend to introduce complicated peer or self assessment techniques. However I do recognise its powerful value and devised simple self and peer assessment techniques. Once learners became used to this then I hoped to introduce more complex ways of assessing.

Self and peer assessment are intrinsic to a process approach to learning. When learners assessed each other's work and there was conflict and tension, the explanation could partly be found in what Boud (1995) means regarding the image learners have of themselves and their peers. For him there is a relationship between self assessment and self image. This could be generalised to peer assessment. When learners think lowly of themselves or their peers they tend to assess in ways congruent with this image. This might have been operating on an unconscious level and this is what might have caused the conflict.

4.2.5 Assessing argument

Andrews suggests that any model of assessing argument must include

- assessing the ability to sustain the argument
- understanding diction with terms such as 'however'
- rhetorical strategies
- assessing the ability to appreciate another's point of view
- using appropriate strategies.

(1995:159)

Andrews does however point out the great difficulty in assessing argument. The criteria that he suggests above could also be emphasised differently or changed depending on the genre. For instance the criterion of 'appropriate strategies' would differ for different genre. The criteria should clarify register and purpose. In the case of a letter to the press, criterion such as 'interesting opening to catch the readers' attention' was extremely important. The topic also placed emphasis on the kind of language that should be used. That is why it was important to include 'strong language' as a criterion for this particular writing task. The nature of the topic

demanded that writers should try to convince their audiences so the 'ability to appreciate another's point of view' fell into the background.

The criteria for teaching skills in argument should be clear, focused and simple. Argument is particularly difficult for English Second Language learners who might still struggle with vocabulary and understanding diction. Register is extremely important when teaching argument. The context (and therefore purpose) of the argument should help with using the correct register.

Andrews discusses how effective teaching argument could be, when seen in terms of metaphors. This could be done with novel ways to teach paragraphing. He uses dance and journeys as examples of his metaphors. Using the journey metaphor he shows how effectively a three staged approach to the teaching of paragraphing for argument. I quote this at length because of its novelty and its interest:

First she explored the notion of journeys with her pupils, asking them to describe a number of journeys they had taken. These were depicted on the board, and each one fell into different stages that she represented in different colours and different lengths. These many staged journeys were then used as metaphors to describe the composition of stories and essays in paragraphs. Next she asked the pupils to reconstruct a text that had been cut up into its constituent paragraphs. Finally she asked them continue the text in their own writing.

(1995:50)

However I think Andrews is right when he says there are no prepackaged solutions nor are there set ways of writing an argument.

Standard assessment does not do justice to the basic principle of argument, its fitness for purpose its audience and its mode of discourse. Assessment should reflect this complexity and assess these individual skills. It must also examine the base of the iceberg, which is the whole process. This is why examinations are 'unsuitable for the assessment of written argument...' (Andrews: 1995:50). Moving away from the examination format has a double effect: it allows for a different process approach to writing and at the same time it opens up a wider range of forms of writing to the student. Halden-Sullivan say that if assessment gives value to the processes that went into composition, then assessment could become very effective (1996; Butler and Bentley: 1997). Rough drafts, talking and group mind mapping are all considered processes in the composition of argument.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS AND IMPLICATIONS

In chapter 3, I described the implementation of the writing and assessment programme, while chapter 4 brought together the theoretical and practical implications of this programme. This chapter synthesises these two chapters by providing the findings and the implications of implementing alternative writing-assessment practices.

The findings and implications are based on my insight and understanding of implementing the programme as well as the context of the research which were: criteria for writing; assessment of writing; and learners' attitudes to and perceptions of their writing abilities.

Finally my insight and understanding are placed in conversation with the following research questions: 'Did alternative assessment have any impact on learners' writing', 'Did learners' attitude to writing change', and following from these two questions: 'What further information with regard to alternative assessment practices could lead to changes and improvement in learners' writings'? Though the latter part of the last question was not part of the research, I shall however speculate on whether the programme lead to improvement in learners' writings.

5.1 Criteria for Writing

The explicit criteria acted as expectations for writing, and these expectations made learners more conscious of the skills they were required to demonstrate in their writing (Nightingale: 1986:25). These skills included paying attention to structure, organisation and the conventions of writing. In response to seeing the connection between explicit criteria and applying these, one learner said:

'...making me see what I'm actually writing...'

At the same time the awareness of the composing process made learners more conscious of an audience and that their message must make sense to someone else.

This made them careful about clearer communication. One learner said with regard to being conscious of audience:

'... I'm more focused on what the topic is telling the reader'.

It appeared that some learners experienced criteria as an imposition or did not understand them as guidelines for writing. Perhaps these learners felt that writing should be a natural activity and not one that could be taught (see also chapter 3 for a discussion and for learners' comments on this). Learners' originality and creativity would be undermined if they were to interpret criteria as rules to be followed religiously. Criteria are guidelines and this should be stressed. One learner saw the sense of this because his response was:

'...I try to use most of the guidelines (as possible). There will only be one or two of the guidelines that stays or hasn't been used'.

When one of the learners who had found criteria stifling was asked if he had seen any changes in his writing in the past few weeks as a result of making criteria explicit, he said:

'I can't quite put my finger on it but it has benefited'.

Criteria also made individual differences in writing abilities more obvious. Some learners were able to come up with more advanced or challenging criteria. It was important to explore this, particularly with more advanced learners.

In this programme learners were offered criteria, discussed them and then devised their own. The criteria were pooled on the OHP for everyone to see. Learners were given the choice of either adding them to their list or only using the provided criteria. Learners became part of the instruction cycle when they had been involved in the production of criteria. The signs of integrating and internalizing criteria become apparent when learners themselves developed criteria (Alverno: 1994:66). It was important to include learner-generated criteria with those the teacher had devised. As criteria became internalised, learners relied less on the basic criteria such as those in LO3. They were able to devise more elaborate criteria or experiment with others themselves.

When learners generated criteria, it created confidence in their abilities as writers. This had the effect of making the class feel more cohesive. This cohesion was important for working in groups and peer assessment exercises.

Setting criteria also encouraged group work and collaboration. Learners were often deep in discussion and this was particularly excellent for engaging weaker

learners. By placing weaker learners with more advanced learners, both the weaker and stronger ones benefited.

Learner-generated criteria were also a way of gauging learner thinking about writing. From this it was apparent that the concerns were mostly about spelling, using 'big words' and vocabulary.

By generating criteria teachers could also become more conscious of the requirements for writing in different genres. This was evident in the argument writing task.

There should be no hurry to introduce criteria. Criteria could be introduced after or before a first draft. This depends entirely on the writing task, learners' abilities and readiness. It is important though to be sensitive to timing, particularly when a writing task is demanding and requires complex skills.

When the construction of criteria was based contextually then the reflective process for both learners and teachers became even more crucial. The reflective process should be embedded in the whole teaching programme because it was partly through this that strengths and weaknesses, as well as what worked and what didn't could be identified.

From the personal writing tasks I learnt that a criterion on critical reflection could be devised to extend the personal writing mode. Another criterion for personal writing could be to use more appropriate emotive words for expressing particular experiences.

5.2 Assessment Criteria

An important aspect of reporting assessment was that it should be non-threatening. This was embedded in this alternative approach. I was careful to construct descriptors that would be developmental and not negative in their judgements. Words such as 'poor' are a negative descriptor and were replaced with 'Not yet there'. The developmental description told learners that they still had time to 'Get(ting) there' and thus to improve.

From learners' comments with regard to the assessment descriptors, it was clear that our past negative judgements were discouraging (see their comments in chapter 3). Learners felt encouraged and buoyed by positive judgements of their writing.

The assessment criteria did not reduce writing to a single score but recognised the complexity of thinking and writing. Assessment criteria should be rich in inferences and descriptors. A single score would not adequately express how learners had performed in the various categories of criteria.

The rich inferences and descriptors of assessment criteria were also a tool to assess curriculum insofar as it indicated where learners' problems and strengths lay for curriculum reform. It showed me what had to be done better or differently or even which aspects were not emphasised in the curriculum. For LO6 when learners were required to write arguments it was clear that mind mapping should be redone as well as parts of teaching argument. In addition when assessing learners' writing it was clear that the assessment criteria did not adequately express what the expectations were for writing in this genre (see the detailed discussion on this under 3.6.4). Teachers have to carefully consider that the criteria they construct reflect the skills they wish to tap.

Assessment criteria were judged on a 1 to 5 point scale. If a learner scored 1 and another scored 5 then this could be seen as a judgement of abilities. I tried to make it clear that this was not a negative value but rather a way of identifying for the learner which aspects of their writing still needed to be attended to.

When assessing learners work on a scale, I had to guard against generalisations. A way to do this was suggested by Wiggins. He recommended that the jump between descriptors be large. So that for instance the difference between an 'Excellent' and 'Good' should be fairly big (1994). This was useful particularly when learners queried my judgements. I am not sure to what extent this learners had understood this.

Learners must understand the purpose of assessment. Many learners found it difficult to get away from the idea that assessment was *'to show you where you went wrong, to point out your mistakes'* as one learner put it. However another responded when asked in a whole class discussion about the purpose of assessment :

'...it is to build yourself...'. Another said *'I have more fate [sic] in my work. I don't panic when the teacher takes my work'*.

Early on in the programme this learner had internalised the developmental nature of the criteria.

Learners must understand the assessment criteria. To do this assessment criteria had to be simplified. It was important that this simplification should still express what one wanted to assess. For instance if one wanted to assess 'Voice', the criteria could be 'Am I in my writing?'. At the same time the complexity and depth of writing should not be sacrificed by simplistic criteria that did not measure anything.

When learners were asked if they had understood the assessment criteria, most said they had though some expressed confusion and uncertainty.

Learner generated assessment criteria should also be included as part of the assessment page. This was easy at times when criteria for assessment simply had to be added to the assessment page. It could mean re-doing the assessment schedule and this required more work particularly when the assessment pages had already been done. One way is to wait for the process of adding criteria and then to draw up the assessment pages.

It is possible to miss aspects of writing because one could become preoccupied with criteria. We do not have access to all the thought processes of writing so that we could miss good writing because these did not 'fit' the criteria. Mindful of what John Dewey said 'One of the greatest of educational fallacies is that the student only learns what he is being taught' (in Eisner: 1993:222). This means that criteria can never identify everything the learner is capable of and in this way not be given credit for being different or for originality. This could potentially be a problem particularly with the very accomplished learners. I do not have an answer for this and can only suggest that as we get to know our learners better we should keep a look out for these special individuals. Another way to deal with this challenge could be to keep an open mind. Teachers could identify unusual criteria and respond to these for individual learners. This should be debated by communities of teachers and learners in the class particularly when assessment is for high stakes purposes such as being graded for passing or failing as our system does presently.

Learners must become participant assessors if they are to own the learning process. These could range from peer assessment; group assessment; self assessment; reflection assessment; teacher/learner assessment. It is important for the teacher to understand and be sensitive to a class's dynamics when choosing peer assessment as my experience with these shows. For me peer assessment was a powerful learning

experience. Learners' confidence soared when they were given this ultimate responsibility. Despite this many learners were not happy to show their writing to their peers and felt self-conscious and insecure. When learners were asked to reflect on this process some felt unfairly treated or even embarrassed. They also felt uncomfortable about giving an assessment on the lower end of the scale because they feared angering the person. Relationships of trust must exist.

Alternative approaches use multiple assessment strategies. 'We need to foster a system which supports multiple methods of assessment while at the same time making sure that each one is used appropriately' (Gipps: 1994:17). We still use 'marks' or 'grades'. There is still debate about the validity of this. However parents and learners themselves still rely on this as an indicator of their performance. There was a tension between the desire to be non-judgmental while still using 'marks' as an indicator of growth. Learners themselves find it difficult to get away from the idea of getting marks. I thought the assessment descriptors would have clarified this. This was naïve because the whole system relies on marks and in the end learners know that it is marks that would get them through a grade. In the programme I was compelled to assess holistically with a mark because of examination requirements.

However criterion-assessment does not exclude holistic assessment. In fact initially both were necessary. In addition to assessing using assessment pages, I also wrote specific comments on learners' pages. This was so particularly when learners were very weak or when they showed unusual insight. Doing both means more work for the teacher.

While I assessed learners' writing with the assessment pages, I did not make actual marks on their papers for corrections. However this raised a problem. For example if a learner got '3' for 'Voice' it would be difficult to know exactly how he should go about improving. While these scales gave him information about performance it did not give information on how to improve. An irate learner expressing some hostility said when asked if he had understood the assessment:

'No because I used long sentences and she only gave me '2' '.

It is possible that this learner had indeed used long sentences but the sentences may have been syntactically incorrect. This raised a problem. Even though this learner had used long sentences, the question was if he/she should be given credit for this criterion even though her/his sentences were grammatically incorrect? Another example of just such a problem was if a learner got a low 2 for conventions, it would

be difficult for the learner to know exactly where he/she went wrong. This appears to be the same problem as with holistic scoring.

Criterion based assessment required more work and took longer to assess learners papers than holistic assessment would have. Assessing with criteria required being very conscious of learners' writing. This was important for fairness. This was also necessary for revision and for improving writing. We can no longer be vague but have to give feedback that would be of use to them if we intend to use a developmental strategy.

Some learners found criterion based assessment useful. Lindi pointed out that:

'It lets you know exactly where you are in terms of your writing. There is no negativity involved in using this assessment. When you get your page you know at what level you are writing and every time you can see how much you've improved.'

I think that for this learner the assessment was less vague and more structured and definite in letting her know how she had performed in her writing.

The assessment information that would change instruction was embedded in learners' writing. I have already referred to how this was done for the personal and critical writing modes.

5.3 General Information from the Writings of all Learners

There appeared to be diversity and individual differences between writing modes for skills and in the same mode. For instance some learners were better than others at adding 'colour' to their writing while others were better skilled at 'voice' in the same modes. Some learners were better at 'voice' for the personal writing than for the critical modes. The teacher needs to nurture developing skills while at the same time be able to provide more coaching for others.

Most learners appeared to do well for the personal mode but generally had difficulty with critical writing. But even here there was great variation. Learners who were more accomplished in one mode for instance in the personal mode, did not automatically transfer these skills for other modes. One learner wrote with ease for the personal mode but struggled in the argument mode.

If the personal mode presented fewer problems, then the connection between the personal and the argument should be further explored and strengthened for

appropriate interventions. Since the personal mode presented fewer problems, learners should be given more demanding personal writing tasks as an anchor for critical writing.

The personal mode could also be extended by more self-critical writing and involve problem-solving skills so that learners could critically reflect on their experiences as they go through life. Critical skills are required for argument writing and the same criteria for the personal involving the critical skills could be generalised to the argument. Perhaps the imaginative mode could also form the springboard for the argument.

Learners had difficulty developing and fleshing out the argument. Andrews (1995) says that a writer's argument should also be judged by the ability of the writer to sustain an argument. Appropriate criteria for writing and assessment should be developed for this.

All the learners must make the division between speaking and writing clearer because they tend to write as they speak. Sperling (1996) recommends that pedagogy be developed that would exploit the writing-speaking relationship. Talking about the differences between speaking and writing, Gannon (1985) makes the point that writing is not just speech written down. Yet Sperling says that research into the connection between speaking and writing discourse has only just begun (1996). The general assumption appears to be that to write the way one speaks is not only not a good idea but not entirely possible, and further that 'learning to write means learning to shake the bad habits established in speaking' (p. 86). Countering this is the view that speaking supports writing, that these two co-exist. In a classroom where there is hot debate and interest in a subject with different views, these ideas should be put down in writing. This speaking-writing dichotomy could be bridged by learning to 'anticipate how one's words will be read' (p. 55), that is knowing and developing a sense of audience and purpose for writing. Sperling suggests that learners' speaking ability could be a potent force in their written discourse.

Once learners became more aware of register, other aspects of their writing would improve. Much more work needs to go into the relationship between register and purpose. The audience establishes the purpose for writing. It is crucial and at the same time very difficult to create an audience particularly for classroom writing. More real opportunities should be created for writing. Much of school writing is

without a context and thus an audience. Wilkinson believes that an audience is crucial for developing writing skills (1980).

It was clear from learners' writing that the non-standard form of English was used extensively. Learners also tended to translate directly from their first language into English. The new curriculum does make some place for the non-standard form though learners are largely restricted to the standard form (Gannon: 1985:53).

One of the biggest problems was lack of vocabulary. Teachers must find more creative and inventive ways of extending the word power of learners. This would enrich their writing. It was obvious in the letter of appeal for writing argument that the stock of words and ideas in the story provided a framework. This improved the quality of learners' writing.

This highlights an important point for developing skills for writing. It would be pointless teaching writing skills if learners did not also have the power to use those skills. Part of the power to use these skills would be if they had the words or the critical faculties. Part of the critical faculties required for argument writing are deductive sequence skills and persuasive techniques. The challenge is to provide opportunities and to develop criteria to tap these skills.

Argument writing also requires a fair knowledge of the subject of the argument. If writers do not have this knowledge then they would not be able to use these skills. Perhaps this was a factor for the argument writing here and could perhaps explain why learners did better on the literature based argument.

The writing pieces were short and perhaps if learners had more knowledge about the subject for their argument (writing was prefaced with debate and discussion though this did not necessarily add to learners' existing knowledge), they might have felt more encouraged writing longer pieces. Their writing was too short to demonstrate all the skills required for argument. Learners must be encouraged to write longer pieces. It would be pointless to provide a list of criteria and learners' writings are not long enough to demonstrate their competence in using the criteria.

When learners had difficulty with a particular genre as in the case of critical writing, then it would be necessary to rather concentrate on one criterion at a time instead of giving learners all the criteria at once. In this programme, possibly it was too difficult for learners to negotiate all the criteria at once while at the same time having to think of words to express their ideas.

The implications should thus make it clear that it is not only criteria nor alternative assessment practices alone that improves writing. I have identified vocabulary, developing learners' problem-solving skills, longer pieces and making the difference between speaking and writing clearer as important for these particular learners to take advantage of and to benefit from using criteria for writing and assessment. This information provided me with new insights into the writing and assessment processes of learners. This appears to corroborate what Keiffer and Morrison believe, namely 'that assessment information is embedded within the context of the classroom community' (1994:411).

5.4 Conclusion

It was not the intention of this study to see if alternative assessment would lead to improvement. There were no pre/post test writing samples. However the study was able to gauge the extent to which learners had used criteria and whether using the criteria led to the desired learning outcomes. This study is not able to provide a definite or conclusive answer and would rather take note of what Banta says in this regard. He says that it 'takes time to effect change in academic programs and methods of instruction and then to chart the impact of these changes on students' knowledge and skills' (in Shay: 1998b: 172). Tait mentions the nature of learning itself as a factor in charting progress. 'Learning is an accumulative and highly complex process accompanied by a range of cognitive, metacognitive, attitudinal and motivational shifts, and (therefore) it is extremely difficult to demonstrate 'objectively' how specific teaching inputs or interventions contribute to improved learning' (p.172). In order to generalise findings large populations have to be studied. This research only used seven subjects. However Vinjevold and Taylor make the point that while heeding this important caution, at the same time researchers could learn important lessons from small pilot studies (1999).

Hutchings and Marchese say that when assessing the outcomes of a programme 'it makes sense to gather information on the student side, too' (1990:21). In this programme, learners were intimately involved with the writing and assessment programme. Their opinions on what worked and what didn't were invaluable. When

learners were asked in the Reflection questionnaire 'How did your writing benefit from this assessment?' and 'How do you feel about your writing now? Tell me whatever you like about it.

'Yes. Off course. It really got me thinking'.

'My writing has more excitement and I'm more focused on what the topic is telling the reader. I've made use of adjectives and nouns, which is very good for the writing'.

'I'm proud of my writing'.

Butler and Bentley believe that it is important to consider what writers have gained from activities to measure 'the success' of a programme (1997: 91). In this regard it was evident that all the seven study subjects showed more pride, eagerness and confidence in their writing ability. This was shown in the reflection questionnaires as well as in their demeanor in class. The atmosphere in class was more spontaneous, more enthusiastic and more motivated. I think that I can say with a fair amount of confidence that learners wanted to write more (was not a threatening chore), they enjoyed writing, they changed their attitude to writing and the writing-assessment activities improved teacher-learner interactions with regard to this part of the curriculum.

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APPENDIX A

ENGLISH 2ND LANGUAGE
ASSESSMENT OF CONTINUOUS WRITING

CONTENT	LANGUAGE	EXCELLENT	VERY GOOD	GOOD	ABOVE AVER.	AVERAGE	BELOW AVERAGE	POOR BUT PASSES	VERY POOR	UNINTELLIGIBLE
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
<p>EXCELLENT -exceptional development of topic -descriptive, discursive, anecdotal: 4-5 points thoroughly explored -narrative: very strong story line building to a striking climax -excellent intro. and ending -vivid detail or examples -very realistic, sincere writing -very original, highly creative</p>	90-100% A+	90-100% 36-40 27-30 18-20 10	85-95% 34-38 26-28 17-19 9	80-90% 32-35 24-26 16-18 8-9						
<p>VERY GOOD -topic well developed -exceptional development of topic -descriptive, discursive, anecdotal: 3-4 points well explored narrative: story flows well, contains unusual & interesting developments -very good intro. and ending -very good detail or examples -convincing, progresses well</p>	80-89% A	85-95% 34-38 26-28 17-19 9	80-90% 32-35 24-26 16-18 8-9	75-85% 30-33 23-25 15-17 8	70-80% 28-31 21-24 14-16 7-8					
<p>GOOD -discursive: at least 3 points well developed -story flows well -good intro. and ending -good detail and examples</p>	70-79% B	80-90% 32-35 24-26 16-18 8-9	75-85% 30-33 23-25 15-17 8	70-80% 28-31 21-24 14-16 7-8	65-75% 26-29 20-22 13-15 7	60-70% 24-27 18-20 12-14 6-7				
<p>ABOVE AVERAGE -fairly good understanding of topic -descriptive, discursive: at least 3 points explored -narrative: story reads easily -relevant intro. and conclusion -attempt at interesting detail, examples</p>	60-69% C		70-80% 28-31 21-24 14-16 7-8	65-75% 26-29 20-22 13-15 7	60-70% 24-27 18-20 12-14 6-7	55-65% 22-25 17-20 11-13 6	50-60% 20-23 15-18 10-12 5-6			
<p>AVERAGE -candidate able to interpret the topic -descriptive, discursive: some relevant points, but not developed -sometimes repetitive -narrative: a very ordinary story, some ideas not to the point -intro. and ending perhaps irrelevant or over long</p>	50-59% D			60-70% 24-27 18-20 12-14 6-7	55-65% 22-25 17-20 11-13 6	50-60% 20-23 15-18 10-12 5-6	45-55% 18-21 14-16 9-11 5	40-50% 16-19 12-14 8-10 4-5		
<p>BELOW AVERAGE -limited understanding of topic -descriptive, discursive: very few ideas, often repetitive/off topic -general line of thought can be followed -narrative: story line can be followed, though not always clear</p>	40-49% E				50-60% 20-23 15-18 10-12 5-6	45-55% 18-21 14-16 9-11 5	40-50% 16-19 12-14 8-10 4-5	34-44% 15-17 10-13 7-9 4	34-40% 14-15 9-12 7-8 3-4	
<p>POOR BUT PASSES/JUST FAILS -slight understanding of topic, but ideas are muddled -argument of story line can barely be followed</p>	34-39% F					40-50% 16-19 12-14 8-10 4-5	34-44% 15-17 10-13 7-9 4	34-40% 14-15 9-12 7-8 3-4	25-34% 11-14 8-9 5-7 3	20-33% 8-13 6-8 4-6 2-3
<p>TOO POOR TO PASS -no understanding of topic -contents irrelevant or disconnected</p>	20-33% EE-C						34-40% 14-15 9-12 7-8 3-4	25-34% 11-14 8-9 5-7 3	20-33% 8-13 6-8 4-6 2-3	15-25% 4-10 5-7 3-5 2
<p>UNINTELLIGIBLE -what is written can in no way be connected to the topic -pre-learn / off topic</p>	0-19% H						25-34% 11-14 8-9 5-7 3	20-33% 8-13 6-8 4-6 2-3	15-25% 4-10 5-7 3-5 2	0-20% 0-7 0-6 0-4 0-1

APPENDIX B

FLEXIBLE WRITING-ASSESSMENT PROGRAMME

This programme is structured and organised as follows:

FOCUS 1: Basic Writing Skills

Learning Outcome 1: Building Vocabulary: words/phrases

Learning Outcome 2: Making Sentences from Familiar words/phrases

Learning Outcome 3: Paragraph writing.

FOCUS 2: GENRE

Learning Outcome 4: Audience and Register: text types/beginnings and endings

Learning Outcome 5: Finding Voice through Personal and Narrative Writing

Learning Outcome 6: Critical Writing: Register and Purpose

Learning Outcome 7: Imaginative Writing: Register and Style

Explanation of the sub-headings for each LO:

MOTIVATION: this part lays the basis and provides the theoretical support for the three sub-sections in each LO. The motivation in each LO is meant to provide the qualitative foundation upon which the next LO rests.

HOW: this part details the practical application for each writing task. A few examples of activities are provided as well as a language focus. The HOW takes into account the motivation.


CRITERIA: this part spells out the criteria used for the performance of the writing task. These criteria are directly related to the demands of the specific task and what is hoped will be learnt.

ASSESSMENT : this part lists the assessment practice used after the completion of a task.

An * indicates that examples of materials used for each writing task, criteria or assessment can be found at the end of the appendices.

FOCUS 1: BASIC WRITING SKILLS

Learning Outcome 1: Building Ideas with Words/phrases

MOTIVATION	HOW	CRITERIA	ASSESSMENT
<p>To assist the learners to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • feel confident and secure • acquire new words and phrases • develop their vocabulary • learn associative skills • build 'Voice' for later writing • not see words in isolation • form units of meaning from word phrases • realise that there are many ways to do the same thing and that there are no right or wrong answers (merely different opinions) • play with and own words <p>To encourage groups to share ideas/words (this is particularly important for low achievers and less confident learners)</p> <p>To recognise Individual learner and group differences</p> <p>To make a beginning with self and peer assessment, which will become a more intense and central activity later on</p>	<p>Objects</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ groups to discuss different names, shapes, colour, uses, newness <p>Pictures</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ what do you see, describe differences in what you see <p>Music</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ associative words, images <p>Draw</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ e.g. pizza and describe how you would eat it, shape, what's on it etc <p>List words and phrases drawn up from above activities*.</p> <p>Associate with other words* pooling process where groups pool words and report to class who will 'steal' whatever appeals to them. Record pooling process and play to class</p> <p>Also for sentences and paragraph writing and gets them to focus on task</p> <p>Language focus - Verbs, Adjectives and Nouns</p> <p>Teacher isolates words for sentences and paragraphs and class categorises into parts of speech</p> <p>Chooses two activities at a time for sentences and paragraphs</p>	<p>Too early to set criteria</p>	<p>Rate your Group</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ we were able to respond with words/phrases ▪ we only found a few words/phrases ▪ we didn't understand what the teacher asked us to do <p>Draw one of these faces on your group page. Now write one of the following words that you think applies</p> <p>Faces</p> <p>  </p> <p>Words</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Excellent Work!!!! ▪ O.K.!!! ▪ Not Yet There!!

Learning Outcome 2: Making Sentences from Familiar Words/phrases

MOTIVATION	HOW	CRITERIA	ASSESSMENT
<p>To help learners to regard words/phrases as building blocks of sentences and paragraphs</p> <p>To enable learners to identify connections between ideas (words/phrases) and sentences</p>	<p>Make sentences using words/phrases from LO1</p>	<p>Criteria provided</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Used colourful words such as Verbs and Adjectives ▪ Made simple (short) and complex (long) sentences ▪ Use connectors (I could use at least...connectors) 	<p>Group Assessment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ we used new words and phrases ▪ we could make long and short sentences ▪ our sentences expressed different ideas ▪ we are able to make grammatical sentences ▪ verbs and adjectives make a difference
<p>To help learners to differentiate between simple and complex sentences</p>	<p>Language focus: Conjunctions*</p>		<p>Teacher Assessment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Did learners use words/phrases from previous exercise ▪ variation in sentence length ▪ used conjunctions ▪ sentences hang together
<p>To help learners to recognise that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • they are the crafters • they have many possibilities at their disposal • sentences are malleable • they can develop their own styles 	<p>Unpacking sentences where a long sentence can be reproduced in many short sentences without changing meaning*</p> <p>Repacking where short sentences are turned into long sentences*</p> <p>Sentence variation changes meaning*</p>		
<p>To encourage learners to know that writing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • can be improved • can be organised • owned by them 	<p>Matching descriptions to pictures where pictures of faces are used to match written descriptions.*</p>		
<p>To introduce the idea that GENRE writing is different from speaking</p>	<p>Show and talk about Writing Wheel*</p>		

Learning Outcome 3: Paragraph Writing

MOTIVATION	HOW	CRITERIA	ASSESSMENT
<p>To help learners to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • make suitable connections between paragraphs • sequence sentences • use logical connections 	<p>Use sentences to make paragraphs Introduce Main ideas and topic sentences*</p>	<p>I/We used sentences from previous exercise, Isolated main ideas Used examples Used supporting statements Gave more detail Was able to write at least 4 to 5 sentences for each paragraph Reader can imagine what the object/picture looked like*</p>	<p>Self Assessment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Goes well beyond what the reader knows • Interesting • Describes the object/picture <p>Teacher Assessment*</p>
<p>To assist learners to move backwards and forwards depending on their stage for this focus, which</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • allows individual decisions • reinforces owning of process • monitors own development • relieves the teacher • is holistic - it sees connections between processes 	<p>Variety of tasks for sequences of sentence logical development learners predict and speculate* Reinforces idea of differences in paragraph writing and idea formation Sequencing of sentences Supporting ideas by giving examples Supporting sentences give more detail and fleshes out main idea Relate one main idea with another idea of paragraphs linking*</p>		

FOCUS 2: GENRE

Learning Outcome 4: Audience and Register: text types/beginnings and endings

MOTIVATION	HOW	CRITERIA	ASSESSMENT
To assist the reader to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • follow • consolidate • internalise 	Revise generating <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ words/ideas ▪ simple/complex ▪ main idea ▪ supporting ideas ▪ 	Learners devise criteria	Teacher to devise assessment based on Learners criteria
To tie in with next focus of genre and voice	Talk about beginnings and endings by using examples drawn from <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ newspapers ▪ reports ▪ letters ▪ tour books ▪ magazines Compare and discuss bad openings Show Writing Wheel again-see LO2*		
To assist the reader to write endings that have a sense of closure and wholeness	Worksheet with mismatched examples Write beginnings and ending for previous paragraphs		

Learning Outcome 5: Finding Voice through Personal and Narrative Writing

MOTIVATION	HOW	CRITERIA	ASSESSMENT
<p>To convey an organising strategy consisting of</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • mind maps • brain storming • loosening-up 	<p>Mind Maps -how to do and transfer for first draft*</p> <p>Free-writing-different kinds to be used throughout*</p>	<p>To remain simple short and concentrate on selected criteria*</p> <p>Criteria to be sensitive to individual experiences</p> <p>Sensitive to diverse groupings e.g. some not willing to share personal</p>	<p>Record learners reading their essays</p>
<p>To develop sincerity in writing for identity and voice by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • situating themselves • placing in context • audience • emotional involvement of writer 	<p>Colours to represent feelings 5 colours representing different emotions and write a paragraph</p> <p>Appearance and reality what roles do you play e.g school, friends, church, family</p> <p>Place yourself in relation to people who are important and draw to represent this relationship</p> <p>Wishes that you have for yourself/family/school/community/society/world</p> <p>Choose two wishes and write</p> <p>Choose two very different roles and relationships and write</p>	<p>Learners encouraged to add own criteria</p>	<p>Editing and checklists*</p> <p>Assessment should build on previous focus</p>
<p>To understand the differences between</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • written and spoken English • voice and style <p>(This lays the foundation for later argumentative/critical/imaginative writing)</p>	<p>Tape-recording of an authentic conversation</p> <p>Ask a few to record conversation from radio or authentic conversations from home</p> <p>Formalise the recording into written language</p> <p>Write from life</p> <p>Construct an argument</p> <p>Language focus;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Direct and reported speech ▪ Verb tenses 		

Learning Outcome 6: Critical Writing: Register and Purpose

MOTIVATION	HOW	CRITERIA	ASSESSMENT
<p>To help the learners to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • realise that discussion and organisation are parts of everyday life • make cognitive gains • develops insight and critical skills • realise that the audience is real but classroom has constraints • develop notional or sensing devices 	<p>Agony Letter e-mail formal letter - respond to job advertisements Newspaper articles and letters to editor - construct argument</p>	<p>criteria related to specific genre and to be developed by learners</p>	<p>Peer correction Assessment and Criteria built on previous and to include: gives reader new information convincing argument Able to distinguish between fact and opinion builds up an argument with support Makes reader think Goes well beyond the obvious</p>
<p>To help the students to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • distinguish between facts and opinions • provide evidence when expressing an opinion • moves to more complex expression of ideas 	<p>Thinking at right angles* Constructing an argument Pool of questions to provoke structure</p>		
<p>To assist the learner to call on semantic memory (in which there is a logical connection between ideas)</p>	<p>Language Focus: useful connectors for argument writing</p>		

Learning Outcome 7: Imaginative Writing: Register and Style

MOTIVATION	HOW	CRITERIA	ASSESSMENT
To help the learners to tie-up with voice and the capacity to be expressive and draw mental pictures	describe and arrange stimulating the imagination jigsaw* focus on style metaphorical language*	Criteria given in formal end of year examinations if time runs out	Holistic and peer/self assessment
To tap episodic and unconscious memories			
To enhance cognitive function			
To facilitate reflection on whole process To establish a revision cycle To help the students to see the whole process	go back to list of words write story of not more than 50 words		

APPENDIX C

REFLECTION PAGE

It is sometimes a good idea to think back on what we have covered in the past few weeks. This is the reason for calling this a Reflection Page. We can see what worked and what didn't. Look back in your folder to remind yourself of the work we have done in class.

1. Do you think the work we have done in the past few weeks has helped you with your writing?
2. When the teacher gives you guidelines of criteria do you find them useful? Tell me about this.
3. When the teacher assessed your work did you understand the method she used?
4. How do you think your writing benefited from this kind of assessment?
5. How do you feel about your writing now? Tell me whatever you like about your writing.

☺ REFLECTION PAGE ☺

I would like to know how you feel about your experiences in the past two weeks. Your words will help me to continue to improve and to see what worked and what didn't. You have been doing group activities, you did quite a bit of revision. I would like you to think about these activities and try as best you can to fill in the spaces below.

1. Can you think of specific activities in the past two weeks that you found especially enjoyable?
2. Can you please tell me what made these times enjoyable?
3. What did you learn from these activities?
4. You did quite a bit of writing. How do you feel about your writing now?
5. Do you think your writing has improved? Tell me about this.

REFLECTION PAGE

IDEAS: Does your first sentence begin in a way that will catch the reader's attention? Does each paragraph have a different idea?

ORGANISATION: Is your writing divided into paragraphs? Is the first sentence the main idea? Do the other sentences give more detail about the main idea?

VOICE: Have you put your feelings into your words? Is it what you really think and feel?

WORDS/PHRASES: Did you use lively words such as plenty of descriptive adjectives and verbs to show action? Have you used simple and complex sentences?

CONVENTIONS: Have you read through your composition and corrected spelling and grammar? Have you used the correct punctuation such as commas, full stops or quotation marks for direct speech?

Please answer the questions in the spaces.

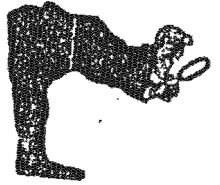
1. Which criteria did you find the most useful?
2. Do you write better when criteria are provided or do you prefer to write without this guide? Why or why not?
3. At this point do you think your writing has improved? If you think 'yes' then what could be the reasons for this? If 'no' what then what do you think could help you improve your writing?

(adapted from Oregon's writing assessment programme: 1994)

APPENDIX D

EXAMPLES OF MATERIALS

Name: _____



objects
Pictures



drawing



MUSIC



Words and
phrases before
grammar

Many teachers feel that real beginners need to be taught some grammar before they can start to do tasks. But is this really the case? In task-based learning, students learn by doing; the learning is part of the task itself.

2
the desire to communicate, make oneself understood, and understand other people's meanings, is paramount. Tasks provide opportunities for learners to listen to and participate in meaning-focused interactions from the very beginning, helping them to acquire the new language more naturally.

Many tasks require minimal syntax and can be achieved quite successfully by learners using just words and phrases. Tasks based on familiar words, and games such as Bingo can be used from the start. Teacher-led tasks and activities, such as 'Simon says', only require learners to understand a series of instructions - they do not need to speak at all.

3
Real beginners, whether travellers or classroom learners, can begin to make themselves understood by learning a lot of words together with a small stock of well-chosen formulaic phrases and sentence stems. As their experience increases, they notice typical forms and patterns in language and the grammar starts to fall into place. They begin to explore different ways of expressing more exactly what they want to mean. It is at this stage that a focus on grammar becomes useful.

Learning Outcome 2

Make sure you know how these words can link ideas. The table below shows their usual position in the sentence.

as well as	can go in the middle of a sentence as above or can go at the beginning. If it precedes a verb the gerund is used: - As well as swimming, the Swedes like many other water sports.
too	goes at the end of a sentence or clause
In addition	usually goes at the beginning of a sentence and is followed by a comma
also	normally comes mid-sentence, and is placed after the verb to be or an auxiliary verb or before a main verb: - They also stole four watches. - The driver has also been arrested. - He is also the best student.
and	with two co-ordinate clauses, addition can simply be indicated by using and.

logical connectors
Adjectives
Verbs
Adverbs

The skill in linking ideas lies in being able to:

- put the emphasis in the right place
- keep the main idea clear
- show the connection between the ideas

a Construct a logical story by choosing one word or phrase
Write the final line of the story yourself.

It had been miserable sunny cloudy all morning and but in the afternoon

it began to rain the sun came out so I decided to do some shopping. go to the library. go to the park. I quickly

got changed and left the house. An hour later, sitting

beside the lake, in a crowded coffee bar, behind a large desk, I was startled by a familiar voice loud crash whisper

behind me. I turned round and saw a man

holding a long knife. holding a large teddy bear. collapsing onto the table next to me. I wanted to stand up laugh scream

but I felt embarrassed. just stared at him. couldn't move. 'I'm sorry I frightened you,' 'I thought you'd like it,' 'This is for you,'

he said, angrily. sadly. coldly.,' I said.

b Now compare your story with your partner's and discuss it

Here are some groups of logical connectors.

1. because, as, since
2. however, but, nevertheless, nonetheless, yet
3. therefore, so, consequently, as a result of, for this reason
4. because of, as a consequence of, in consequence of
5. resulting from, flowing from, ensuing from, stemming from
6. notwithstanding, despite
7. although, bearing in mind, taking into consideration
8. if, provided that, on condition that
9. unless
10. so that, in order that
11. with the intention of, for the purpose of, with a view to
12. moreover, furthermore
- 13.

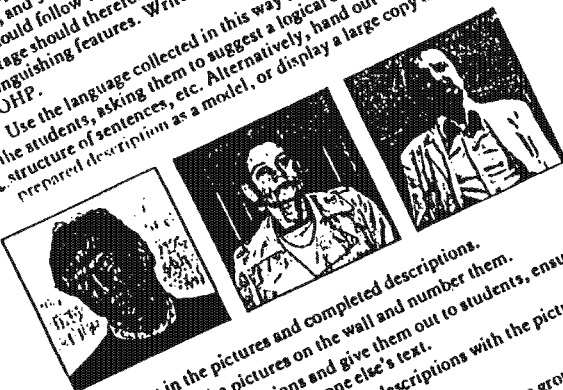
Some other phrases that may be useful are:

in this way
clearly
obviously
accordingly
to sum up
in this connection
on the other hand
at the same time
of course
it would therefore seem

Keep a lookout for these and other connectors in articles you read, so that you get some idea of the ways in which they can be used. Obviously you shouldn't try to memorise these words and phrases - if you understand the type of connection they suggest between ideas, then most of them will pop up almost automatically in your head when you are planning how to express the connection

Descriptions with pictures

- Take one of the pictures for preparatory work with the whole class. Display it for students and elicit adjectives, descriptive phrases, and sentences for describing the person shown. Ideally this task should follow work on the language for describing people and this stage should therefore be revision. Ask students to focus on distinguishing features. Write words and phrases on the blackboard or OHP.
- Use the language collected in this way to write a description with the students, asking them to suggest a logical organization, and the structure of sentences, etc. Alternatively, hand out copies of your prepared description as a model, or display a large copy on the wall.



- Collect in the pictures and completed descriptions.
- Display all the pictures on the wall and number them.
- Shuffle the descriptions and give them out to students, ensuring that every student has someone else's text.
- Students then try to match the descriptions with the pictures, the writer confirming or clarifying.

The task can be adapted according to the size of the group and the availability of resources. The number of pictures should probably be restricted to ten, as higher numbers make the matching task difficult. With larger classes group writing could be employed.

Speaking & writing

Often you find that, when you are talking to your friends, you can explain what you mean quite clearly. But as soon as you have to write down your ideas, they become totally confused in your head, and the result is that no-one else can understand you.

One main reason why people speak better than they write, is that speaking allows you to muddle along, half explaining yourself, jumping from one thought to the next, going back to mention something you forgot - and you can tell from looking at your listeners' faces whether they understand you or not. But when you write, everything has to be set down clearly, once and for all, so that the reader is led easily from one thought to the next.

Try this experiment, either at the end of this lesson if you have time, or in your spare time. Ask someone to explain something to you - for example, why the students boycotted classes in 1976. If you have access to a tape recorder, tape the explanation and then transcribe it (that is, write down what you have taped, word for word). If you can't use a recorder, write down every word the person says. Then give the written version of the explanation to someone who hasn't heard the speaker to read, and see if he or she can understand it.

long and short sentences

1 Repacking a sentence

After completing the 'unpacking' exercise above, ask learners to close their books. They then have to work in pairs to pack all the information from the short sentences back into one long sentence without looking at the original text. It doesn't have to be the same as the original sentence, but it must be grammatical. Pairs can exchange and check each other's sentences. Then ask two or three pairs of learners to write their sentences on the board or on an overhead transparency for the class to spot the grammatical differences. Explore whether these contain any shift in meaning or emphasis.

2 Unpacking a sentence

Choose a long sentence from a familiar written text. One from a newspaper report often works well, for example, the second sentence from the *Cold store* text in 7.3. Ask learners to write the same information in as many short, simple sentences as they can, without repeating any facts. Or allow learners to repeat the same information, but ask them to write it in different ways. Set a time limit, of, say, five minutes, and see how many different (correct) sentences each pair can build in that time. You can either review the exercise by getting learners to write their sentences on the board, or asking them to read them out, for you to write.

We choose at random a decent sentence from a paper we have been listening to, and put it on the board. Since the drafts are new to us, this makes visible that we need not hunt for a sentence deserving of rewriting; all sentences are deserving. Usually, we make two kinds of preliminary remark.

One is about the form and its power to contain and mold meaning. Sentence-making is the skill which most empowers human beings, and it is never inappropriate to remind writers that they exercise that power.

That task is for everyone to write three new versions of the sentence. They may change or retain words, word order, or images; they are to take two or three minutes and say the same thing as the sentence, in any three different ways they wish.

While they do so, a working quiet fills the room, easing the work, as it always does when people are writing together free of inappropriate anxiety.

Each person, in turn around the room, then reads three versions. It is unfailingly interesting, even amazing, to watch as a wide array of expressive possibilities springs from the language in our minds. Those new to rewriting are always surprised. Even those who have written a good round of fables need to write and hear these fifty transformations to know that rewriting serves writers of all kinds. The instructor, too, is refreshed by such affirmation of the power of words. From this evidence, students begin to imagine what rewriting is.

If there is time, we repeat the experience before expanding its usefulness further. We choose another sentence from another draft we have heard, put it on the board, and ask everyone to rewrite it in three versions.

3 steps to owning sentences

3

Further descriptions - adding colour

Do you find it difficult to add colour and life to your writing? Many students are content to use whatever comes first into their heads. They never stop to think what other details they might add to make their work more interesting.

- good descriptive writing requires an eye for detail and a wide vocabulary. One way of helping to bring detail into your work is to make use of all the five senses.

What do you understand by the five senses of the body? Ask your teacher to write the five different senses up on the blackboard. How many of these senses have been used in the description below?

The fire warmed his cold body. He enjoyed the glowing sensation creeping slowly up his legs. His mouth watered when he smelt the meat as it sizzled and spat hot fat into the flames. Pulling the rough blanket over his bare limbs, he peered through the smoke. Placing it carefully in his mouth, he began to chew contentedly.

What does the man:

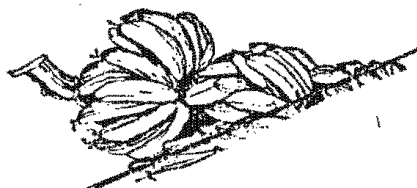
- Hear?
- See?
- Taste?
- Touch?
- Smell?

Each sense adds a new dimension to the description of the scene. Which of the five senses would you particularly associate with the following? Think of a suitable adjective to describe each.

	Sense	Descriptive word (phrases)
newly-baked bread
the mid-day sun
an open drain (sewer)
a pawpaw
smoke
wet paint
a jet plane
a young bride at the church

Think also of: the shape
the colour
the size
the texture of the object you are describing.

Example: a banana is fat / stubby green / yellow / spotted bunch / hard / stem finger / crescent-shaped hard / slimy / firm / squashy, etc.



ASSESSMENT FROM WORDS ON PAGE TO PARAGRAPHS

Name _____

WORDS/PHRASES					
* Responded with words/phrases to OBJECTS AND PICTURES	1	2	3	4	5
* Used colourful words to describe objects and pictures	1	2	3	4	5
SENTENCES					
* Made sentences with words/phrases	1	2	3	4	5
* Sentences were varied and different	1	2	3	4	5
* Some sentences were short while others were long	1	2	3	4	5
* Could express same idea in different ways	1	2	3	4	5
* Generated new sentences	1	2	3	4	5
* Sentences were interesting and held the reader's attention	1	2	3	4	5
PARAGRAPHS					
* Used sentences in paragraphs	1	2	3	4	5
* First sentence was the MAIN IDEA	1	2	3	4	5
* Other sentences gave more details about the main idea	1	2	3	4	5
* Paragraph communicated clearly to the reader	1	2	3	4	5
* Interesting and painted a picture in the reader's mind	1	2	3	4	5
* Clear that the paragraph is the writer's personal ideas	1	2	3	4	5

at the way these ideas are linked in the text:

the Eskimos are descendants of hunters who moved from Siberia into Northern Canada at the end of the last Ice Age, about 12,000 years ago. They still live in this area where there are arctic weather conditions for eight or nine months of the year. In such a climate it is not possible to develop agriculture. The traditional Eskimo economy was therefore based on two basic activities. The first was fishing through holes in the ice or on the open water in canoes. The second was hunting of sea mammals such as whales and seals, and of land mammals such as caribou.

arranging ideas

Read the following passages and then decide on a different way to represent the information contained in them. Once you have decided, find the main ideas and the rewrite the paragraph in this other way. Remember - you only need to show the information that is necessary, some information can be left out.

I have never been to a weekend conference before and was a bit unsure about what to take with me. So when I got your letter wanting the same information, I asked one of the conference organisers what we might need. These are the things she said we should pack. Firstly, for clothes, we will need a comfortable dress or pair of jeans, a warm jersey in case the weather turned cold, a pair of socks that we could go walking in, a couple of pairs of shoes or warm stockings, one or two shirts or T-shirts and some underclothes. She said we would not need smart clothes, as we would be in the mountains away from the city. Secondly, we must pack 2 plates, a spoon, and a knife and fork as the conference centre is not stocked with cutlery and crockery. Lastly, we will need soap and towel, but no make up or fancy creams and perfumes. I hope this tells you all you need to know.

Paragraph structure

Effective pieces of writing usually show a clear paragraph plan, each paragraph with a topic sentence leading into support sentences which develop the topic. For example, the topic sentence, 'I have just a few criticisms to make' leads into more detailed criticisms and comments. Paragraphing for some writers is an uncertain activity, especially where complex information is carefully developed throughout a longer text. Trimble (1983) makes the distinction between the conceptual paragraph and the physical paragraph and this distinction can be usefully applied to the text opposite and in general terms be helpful to EFL students. By conceptual paragraph he means all the information presented by the writer to develop a particular point, idea, or generalization. However, the conceptual paragraph may be realized in several physical paragraphs. For example, the first paragraph of the letter could actually have been set out as two paragraphs with the divide occurring at 'inspired./ Edward Petherbridge . . .' In this way the conceptual paragraph, commending all the merits of the drama, could have been realized in a first paragraph on the production and a second paragraph on the acting of the major role.

Cohesive devices

Cohesive devices are the means by which parts of a text are linked as logically related sequences. They signal the relationship between ideas in such a way that the writer's intentions are made clear. The

you could:

- split up the general/topic statements from the accompanying specific elaboration statements and jumble them. You might need to leave the first and last paragraph intact, to give students sufficient context.
- jumble headlines from short 'News in brief' items and ask students to read the items and select the headline that fits best. To make this more challenging, add two or three extra headlines on similar themes. Since headlines often use words with several alternative meanings, a dictionary exercise could be set at the pre-task phase to help students predict these.

Using a poem, you could:

- either mix up whole verses, or lines within verses.
- NB: Jumbles can be frustrating if texts are divided into too many sections. Before you finalise the task for class use, try it out on someone who has not read or heard the text.

Jumbles are rarely suitable for newspaper reports as events are seldom written in sequence. Always give students credit for arriving at a possible ordering, even if this is not the original order.

Jumbles

Learners are presented with sections or parts of a complete text, but in the wrong order. They have to read or hear each part and decide in which order they would be best. Sequencing often requires quite deep linguistic processing of parts of the text, and an appreciation of the coherence of the whole meaning. The text pattern that lends itself most obviously to this type of task is the sequential one.

- Where an account of a process/a set of instructions/a narrative is accompanied by diagrams/pictures, you could jumble either the text or the visuals. This involves matching text to visuals (see page 84).
- With listening or viewing materials (which are difficult to play in the wrong order), you could use a jumbled summary of the content or a jumbled list of main points (perhaps minus the ending) instead.

Restoration tasks

Students replace words or phrases that have been omitted from a text, or identify an extra sentence or paragraph that has been put in. The aim here is for the student to restore the text to its original state. Although the omissions or additions are normally selected by the teacher, there is no reason why groups of students should not make their own, and give them to other groups. This could make an excellent class revision exercise, with each group working on a familiar text.

Adding an extra sentence to the original text, you could:

- ask students to spot the stranger. It will need to be fairly well disguised, for example, by containing some of the same lexis as the text, but should not make sense in the context.

Adding another text of a similar length on a similar topic but from a different genre, you could:

- merge the two for students to read and separate the paragraphs into the two original texts. For example, this could be done by finding a text about spiders from a children's encyclopaedia, splitting it into four or five short sections and inserting it into the Spiders text. (You would obviously need to retype the merged texts.) This task would be more suitable for higher-level students.

Additions

Paragraph Writing Activities

write lines on the board, one at a time, not necessarily in order. After each line, ask what the poem could be about. Accept everyone's ideas, giving no indication as to which ideas are closest to the original. If students get too frustrated, give them a line containing more clues. Stop when they get near the actual theme and let them read the whole poem. This is fun to do as a whole class exercise.

- give the first few lines, and maybe the last line, and ask students to describe the circumstances behind the poem as they predict something to describe the circumstances behind the poem as they predict something
- Make sure students don't feel they have failed if they predict something entirely different from the original text. Sometimes their ideas are even better; they are often equally interesting and viable.

Predicting problem solutions, story endings, poem themes

Using a text with a situation - problem - solution - evaluation pattern (page 73), you could:

- let students read/hear/watch only the parts which give the situation and problem, and let pairs work out two or three alternative solutions presented their best solutions to each other during a report phase, ask the class to predict which solutions are mentioned in the original text. They finally read/hear/watch the whole piece and compare and evaluate.

Using a sequential text (see page 74), you could:

- Give students most of it and ask them to write an ending.
- Give the ending, and ask them to write the beginning. Giving them a few carefully chosen words from the text (not all key words, and not all nouns) may make it easier.
- get them to hear/read a video/an illustrated children's story/a series of instructions without seeing the pictures, and then ask them to suggest ideas for visuals.
- or, with the same sources, show them the video images (no sound)/pictures/diagrams first, and get them to guess what the text will say at each stage.

What are the qualities of a good beginning?

You have seen that the beginning of a piece of writing should

- set the scene or
- present the subject matter or (sometimes)
- plunges the reader into the midst of the action.

A good beginning should capture the readers' attention, and interest them enough to "draw them in" to read further.

A good beginning might do this by

- creating an interesting atmosphere
- setting the story in a special place or time
- arousing curiosity: who is the writer talking about? what is the writer telling us?
- beginning with a dramatic, or startling, or mysterious statement.
- beginning with a quote from a famous poem or book, with which the reader may be familiar.

What is a good ending?

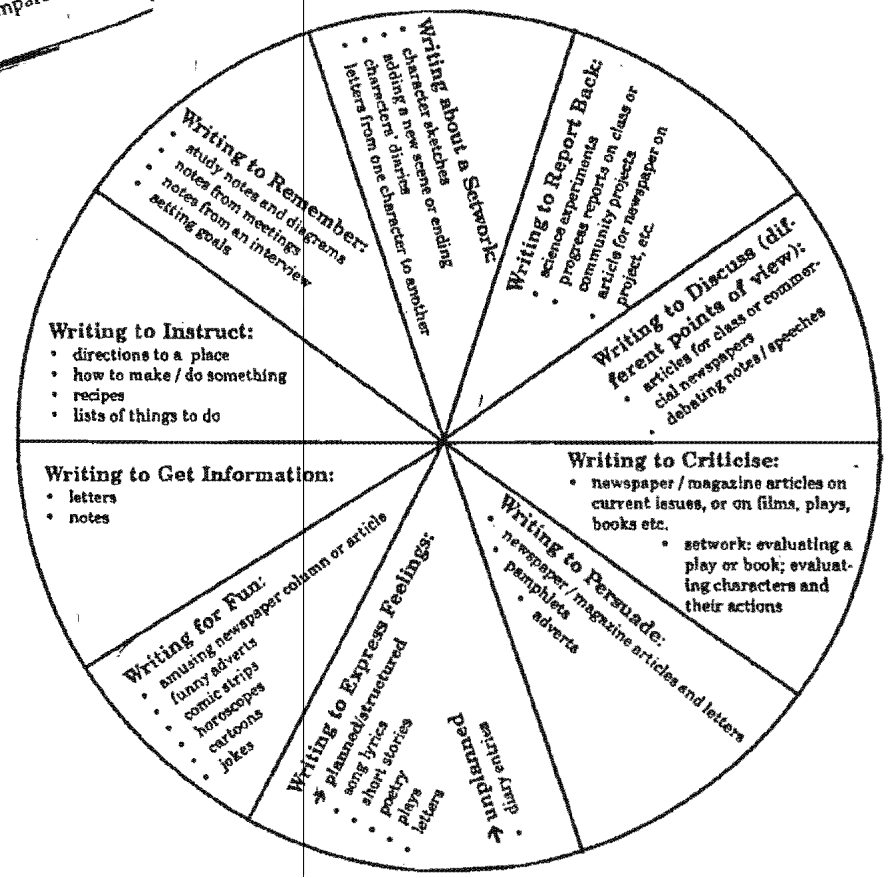
What is a good ending? There are not many "rules" that one can apply, because endings can be so different from one another.

Endings are important, however, because they leave the reader with a last impression.

A good ending might work in different ways — for example:

- draw to a conclusion, or sum up, the writer's central idea
 - leave the reader feeling satisfied, feeling that the message or story is completed
- OR
- sometimes deliberately leaving the reader to decide or wonder how it ended/what should be done
 - make a moral or social judgement on the events or characters
- OR
- deliberately leave the reader to make his own judgement
 - conclude with a philosophical or universal statement that relates the story to all people or all of life.

Writing in Different Ways for Different Purposes.



What Do You Think?

- Note how you might alter any of the writing categories and/or add your own.

SPIDERS

a success story from the new organisation Triumph Over Phobia (TOP).

1 Main theme: Spiders
Circle all the phrases which refer to spiders, including those with e.g. saw one, removed it. Join up the circles with straight lines, to get a text chain (see example below). So can then compare chains to see if they have found the same set of references.

NB: In order to do this, learners will have to focus on aspects of textual cohesion. They may notice the use of plural forms (and the word one) to the idea of a real spider, e.g. doodles resembling spiders. These points can be highlighted at the review stage.

ONE woman was so afraid of spiders she could not be left in a house alone.
If she saw one she would climb on the table and not be able to get down until somebody came into the room and removed it.
During her first TOP meeting she noticed doodles on a page (which resembled spiders) and she suddenly recoiled in horror.
She was eventually persuaded to look at photographs of spiders in books, then leave the pages open in a room so she saw them each time she walked in.
Her husband began to move the position of the book and change the page so she saw a different one each time.
After three weeks she was given plastic spiders at a TOP meeting and took a real spider of the group to the next meeting in a jar to the next meeting where it was gradually moved nearer to the sufferer. She later agreed to take the real spider home and gave it the name Bernard.
Two and a half months after first going to the group her phobia had gone.

The Daily Telegraph 24 January 1994

2 Time and sequence

Ask ss to find between eight and eleven phrases or single words that express the notion of time. Which ones denote the passing of time and thus help to signal the stages in the cure of the phobia? (There are seven or eight of these.)

NB: This highlights a very common function of time phrases - signalling the structure of a sequential narrative. It also shows that not all stages are explicitly signalled, and learners may need to look for less obvious linguistic clues, as in began to ... above.

A further focus on adverbs of time could be achieved by asking where the words suddenly, eventually, gradually later, and first occur in the time phrases. Ask

Writing a newscast

The next two tasks (2.12 and 2.13) are concerned with writing for performance.
Elementary to advanced

The News

- 1 You will need a recording of the news with several items of reasonable length.
- 2 Depending on the level of the group and the degree of guidance which you think is necessary or desirable, you will also need one of the following:
 - a set of newspaper headlines
 - items from the 'news in brief' section of a paper
 - a set of short newspaper articles.

A listening task precedes the writing in this activity.

- 1 Put on a recording of the news and ask the students to analyse the organization of the news and ask the students to analyse content, such as the events as they happened, background to the events, contrasting reported comments of participants or observers, and possible future developments.
- 2 Explain to the students that they are going to prepare the scripts for a local or national news broadcast. Which of these you choose depends on your students' interests and how well informed they are.
- 3 Ask your students to work in pairs or small groups so that you have a reasonable number of items for the broadcast.
- 4 Use one of the prompts suggested above to get the groups started. Headlines may be sufficient, one for each group; 'news in brief' items give a little more idea of content. It may be necessary with some groups to use short articles for a note-taking exercise, picking out key points of information and using them (once the articles have been removed) to write a script.
- 5 Each group should discuss and agree the content and organization of their item, and then write out the script. You, meanwhile, can monitor and give language help.

Sequencing ideas

- 1 You need to find a short mystery story or to make given at the end of task 3.9 was written by a fourteen-year-old secondary school pupil and the activity has worked well with teenage pupils (as well as adults). Formulate a set of questions about the story which are in chronological order and which suit the level of your learners. These can be written on the blackboard or copied for the students. Alternatively, it is possible to imagine the framework of a story and to make up questions accordingly.
- 2 You also need to work out a list of vocabulary items for the activity at step 2. These items could be put on the blackboard or copies made for pair work.

- 1 Tell your students that you are going to read the opening of a story. You want them to listen and tell you what kind of story it is. Read the

Jigsaw story writing

The use of picture stories to stimulate narrative writing in EFL is well established. This task uses a picture story and the principle of the information gap to create task dependency. An information gap task is basically one where one student or group of students holds information which is unknown to another student or group. This simulates real life where communication frequently involves the passing on of previously unknown information from one person to another. In this task each student has only one picture from the sequence and students are required to 'pool' their knowledge in order to piece the story together.

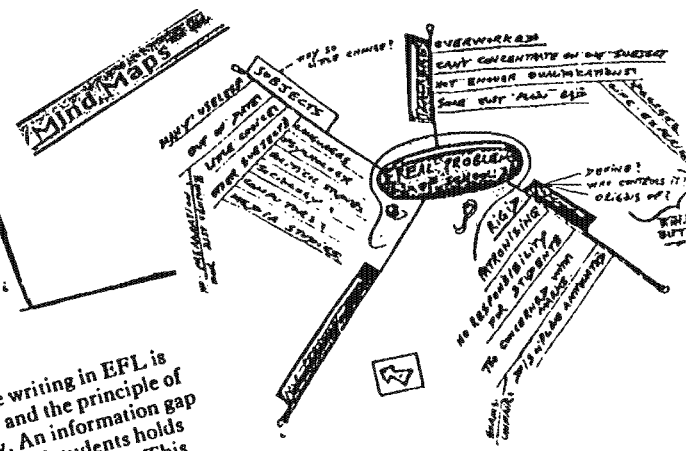
Combining narrative and direct speech

Narratives are often recommended for writing because the organization of ideas is easier than in other types of discourse. The narrative follows a chronological sequence. It is therefore a useful way of encouraging students, especially at school, who need to practise writing. The task is made easier if there is content to hand, such as a local legend or folk-tale for the narrative.

- 6 The completed scripts should be broadcast, the sophistication of the broadcast depending on available facilities. Your students might like to:
 - a. act out a panel of news readers at the front of the class, one reader elected from each group;
 - b. make a cassette recording which can be played back for comment (and possibly remedial work);
 - c. create a video recording which can be shown to the class.

This activity is a useful follow-up to work on reported speech. It also integrates well into a topic on media. In fact, the task can be expanded considerably into a larger project involving discussion on news items, auditions for newscasters, etc. which would successfully integrate all the language skills.

Learning Outcome



One of the branches of this mind map has been left empty: yourself, and see how much you can add.

using verbs in narrative writing

When we tell a story, or write a novel, short story (or any other type of narrative) we are usually describing events and actions that have happened already.

In some languages, narratives - even long ones - are told in the present tense, even if the action has happened already.

In other languages, actions and events that happened a very long time ago, are narrated in a special tense, called the Historic Past tense.

So you can see that not all languages are the same.

* What tense is used for telling a story in your own language?

In English, we generally use the PAST TENSE when writing narrative stories. Usually the verbs will be in the Simple Past.

using verbs in descriptive writing

When we are describing a place that still exists or a person who is still alive, or some action that takes place regularly or all the time - not only in the past - we generally use the Present Tense.

You will have noticed in Passage 11(c) that most of the verbs were (or should have been) in the Present tense.

WP 2/Free Writing

Getting started when you need to write something is not always easy, even if you know more or less what you want to write about. A good way to begin writing is to get into the habit of starting with some process writing. Try it now.

- Choose a topic.
- Set a time limit (about four minutes to start with).
- From the word go, begin writing and do not stop writing until four minutes are up. If you come to the end of a sentence, and do not know what to write next, write anything: *I don't know what to write; this pen is giving me cramps; I could kill for a Coke; I still don't know what to write. Keep on writing no matter what you are writing. But keep trying to get back to the topic. Whatever you do, do not stop to lift your pen off the paper and gaze into the distance.*
- When four minutes are up stop writing. Read through what you have written and mark clearly any words, phrases or sentences that you like. This is a more structured piece of writing. It is more like a story to you as you read.

The essay itself
In the body of the essay, either alternate between positive and negative points, or argue for or against, as Felicia has done.

Some tips:

- Avoid generalisations like *All men are incapable of helping with household chores*. Rather say *Many women find that their husbands cannot help with household chores*. This sounds more convincing.
- Link paragraphs together by using connectors like *on the other hand, in addition to, however, nevertheless and generally speaking*. You can also use careful ordering like *firstly, secondly and so on*.
- Believe what you write. Remember, you want the reader to be convinced by your argument.
- Feelings can get in the way of good argument. Handle your feelings carefully, and order your facts and opinions into a logical discussion.

text up to the sentence which ends with 'anxious'. Elicit this to be a mystery, ghost, or horror story and ask them how to tell.

2 Remind them that adjectives are important for atmosphere. Give them a list of adjectives which can be used to describe a house. They should work in pairs, use a dictionary, and talk to each other to complete the chart.

Adjective	What does it mean?	Is it positive or negative?
gloomy		
cosy		
welcoming		
draughty		
dismal		
cheerful		

3 Tell your students that they are going to write a story that follows a framework of questions which you have devised. Make clear that the questions serve only as a guide and allow for a degree of flexibility. Different students may end up with quite different stories. The story outlined by the questions is intended so that students can make up their own endings.

Asking and giving advice

Almost a traditional activity in EFL classrooms, writing letters to an agony column can be modified into pair or group work in order to provide an audience for writing, and a sequence of activities which work on the task-dependency principle.

Intermediate to advanced
Letters to an agony aunt

You need to have ready examples of letters to agony aunts. In many Western countries, readers can send letters to magazines relating their problems to so-called experts who publish replies. The problems range across a variety of personal, medical, domestic, marital, and professional problems. Here are some examples:

So Lonely

I'm 51, and when my husband left me a year ago for a younger woman, I felt desperate - very frightened, jealous, and angry. Now I have a new job and my confidence is beginning to come back. But I still feel very lonely and panicky at times. I so much want to share my life with someone, but all my friends and work colleagues are married and have their own lives to lead. Can you advise me?

Peace of Mind?

Since I got married my in-laws have resented me and treated me with suspicion. When my marriage started to break up, my husband told my mother-in-law something about my mother-in-law which I am ashamed of now. Since then she has never spoken to me. But my husband never told her about some of the awful things he has done. Now my mother-in-law is dying and I don't want her to go thinking I'm a baddy. Should I tell her?

- A preparatory stage is needed in which you and the class discuss the concept of an agony column and reactions to it. Examples like those above can be used with students to whom the cultural concept is unfamiliar. Or you may use them as a reading activity to warm up to the writing and to provide models for the language.
- Ask each student, pair, or group to think of a problem and formulate a letter to an agony aunt. This second step can be done individually by students or in pairs or small groups.
- When the students have completed the letters they exchange them with another student, pair, or group whose task is to think of/discuss possible answers, and write a reply in the role of an agony aunt.

Personal writing

The best writing often comes out of the writer's personal experience. Although you may have read about, or seen on television, things like mountain accidents, shark attacks, war, the lives of movie stars and "true romance" stories, to write about them can be very difficult, and is seldom successful, even among novelists. Only exceptional writers are able to write convincingly about things beyond their own experiences, but it takes much skill and practice.

What should you do? A good way to write convincing stories is to use your own life experiences and then to add ideas from your imagination.

1

Discursive writing

Quickly list some of the things that you have discussed or argued about in the last few days.

Here are some which might have come up in conversation: the latest movie you have seen; the discipline policy of your school; the way boys treat girls; why your school does not offer a certain sport; the way your parents have been dealing with you lately.

Here is how a discussion might go.

- Tandi Hey, Luke, did you see the movie *Heatland* last night?
- Luke Ja. It was a load of rubbish.
- Tandi No ways! I thought that the acting was brilliant – especially Brad Pitt – and the whole movie was very real. I also liked the music. It was so weird. It worked well!
- Luke No, give me a thriller any day.
- Tandi Never. The thing about this film is that everything worked together to make it really good.

Without realising it, Tandi is constructing an argument in favour of her statement that she likes the film. She makes three main points:

- the acting was good
- the film was convincing
- the music was appropriate.

By providing reasons in her attempt to convince Luke that the film is good, Tandi is arguing discursively. At the end she finishes her argument by making a statement which sums everything up: *everything works together*.

2

Think of a film that you have seen recently, and like Tandi, list some of the points that would support your argument. Write your argument into a paragraph and then share it with others in the class.

How to start: the hook questions
 The secret about starting your essay is not to waffle. Use these questions to guide you.

- Have you attracted your readers' attention?
- Have you given your readers enough for them to want to read on?

Look at this introduction.

Sport has no place in schools today. School sport is simply a waste of time and energy. What school leavers need today in order to compete for jobs is a strong academic pass, not a list of sports that they have played.

Sport is for relaxation and leisure. What place can it possibly have in an educational institution?

Felicia has stated very clearly what the problem is, and what she feels about it. The reader will feel moved to read on and find out more about this point of view.

- Here are some techniques that you can use in your introduction:
- a first sentence which is a clear, sharp statement of intent
 - quotations from famous people
 - rhetorical questions. These are statements in the form of questions, which trigger answers in the reader's mind.
 - anecdotes, which are stories that illustrate your point.
- The best of these kinds of introductions, though, is the first: make your point and get on with it.

3

Writing your own discursive essay

Success at high school depends on your image.

Drugs are here to stay. The only defence against them is to legalise them.

School teachers should also get end of term reports.

Minors should go to jail for crimes in the same way that adults do.

Single sex schooling is the only form of schooling that really works.

Choose one of these topics. Brainstorm or mindmap your ideas. You can use any of these methods:

- list positive and negative points, and the points of general interest. This is known as the PMI method (Plus, Minus and Interesting).
- list only the positive points.
- list only the negative points.

• Ask students to suggest reasons why women live longer than men. Elicit a few ideas and, as students try to express them, show them various ways of explaining reasons and results:

- As a result,
- As a consequence,
- So,
- Since,
- As
- Because

men often take on the main financial responsibility of keeping a family, they develop stress-related illnesses many; young men are killed in wartime.

One reason why women live longer than men is that their bodies are naturally able to survive longer.

• Give students the list of suggestions as to why women live longer than men, and ask them to discuss in pairs. Ask them to decide which are the most important reasons, which are only secondary, and which are not true or irrelevant. They may wish to add others.

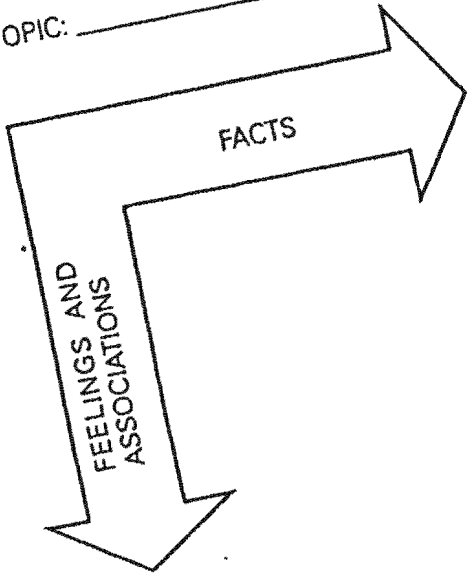
One of the most important methods for leading people smoothly through an argument, is by using logic. The dictionary defines logic as "soundness, correctness of reasoning". Most arguments are developed logically - that is, by showing the way in which one idea is connected to another.

Of course, before you can explain the connections between ideas to someone, you have to understand them yourself. So when you start writing sentences and paragraphs to explain your point of view about different topics in these lessons, you'll first have to think very carefully about whether there is a clear line of reasoning in what you want to say.

THINKING AT RIGHT ANGLES

Directions: Select a topic and list the facts about it in column A and feelings and associations in column B.

TOPIC: _____



A

B

logic in argument

Make some sentences from the words in this box. (There are at least 15.)

Example:

'The plate was dirty so I put it in the dishwasher.'

The	shirt plate ice cream butter bread bottle knife	was	broken damp clean stale melting empty dirty	so I put it in the	drawer fridge tumble dryer cupboard wardrobe freezer bin dishwasher
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4

a With a partner, discuss the advantages and disadvantages of the two types of home in these pictures.

