

TEACHING FOR WRITING PROFICIENCY:

PRINCIPLES AND APPROACHES

CALVIN and HOBBS

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FOUR PRINCIPLES OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE WRITING

1. Writing competence is a general notion that does not refer to any specific language.

- * Good L1 writers will be good writers in L2.
- * Writing competence is not the same as language competence.

2. Writing in the foreign language is not the same as writing in the native language.

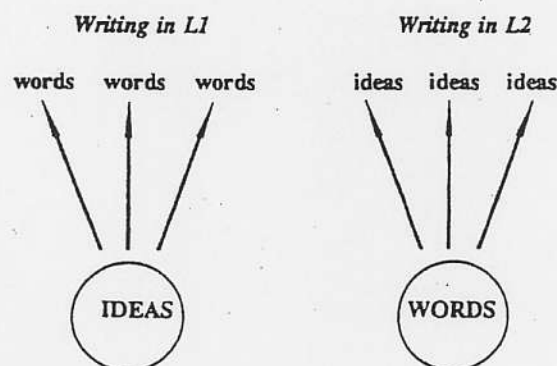
- * L1 writing: ideas ---> words
- * L2 writing: words ---> ideas ---> words

3. Practice does not necessarily make perfect.

- * An early start is important.
- * Carefully designed tasks are essential to the development of good writing.
- * Organization and guidance are essential if students are to write comprehensible, meaningful compositions on the first try.

4. Correction and feedback are only one aspect of teaching writing.

- * The red pen (post-writing intervention) is of limited value.
- * Pre-writing intervention (specific guidelines on purpose, context, linguistic requirements) has greater value.
- * Students feel more secure when the guidelines are clear.



Virginia Scott, "Write from the Start." In Robert M. Terry (ed.), *Dimension: Language '91: Making a World of Difference*. Report of the Southern Conference on Language Teaching (pp. 1-15). Valdosta, GA: SCOLT.

WRITING A SELF-DESCRIPTION: TWO APPROACHES TO THE SAME WRITING TASK

Situation: You are writing a description of yourself for a catalogue of email pen pals. Later you will read other students' descriptions and choose a pen pal with whom you will correspond.

Example 1: Heavily structured (transcription/practice)

Instructions. Write your self-description. It should be 6-8 sentences long. Include answers to the following questions:

1. How old are you?
2. Are you tall or short?
3. What color are your hair and your eyes?
4. Are you extroverted or shy? Funny or serious?
5. What do you like to do in your free time?
6. How do you feel about studying _____ (language)?

Example 2: Open-ended; composing for a specific audience

Instructions. Brainstorm [note: this could be done individually or in small groups] about the questions below. Then write your self-description for the catalogue. There is a space limitation—the descriptions can be no more than 6-8 sentences long.

1. Think about the kind of person you would like as your email pen pal. What characteristics will appeal to you when you read the self-descriptions in the catalogue?
2. How do you want to present yourself in your self-description? What should you write that will attract a pen pal with whom you will enjoy corresponding?

CREATING TASK-ORIENTED WRITING GUIDELINES

(adapted from Virginia Scott 1992)

Prior considerations:

- * Choose a task that reinforces material with which students are already familiar.
- * Choose interesting topics. Ask yourself, "Would I want to write on this topic?"

Steps for writing task-oriented guidelines:

1. A **situation**, or context, should describe the function and the purpose of the writing activity. It is essential that the situation be relevant and meaningful for the students. The situation should be written in general terms and, therefore, adaptable to students at any stage of writing ability.
2. Several **tasks** should follow, each describing explicitly the steps students must take to achieve the purpose of the assignment. The nature and complexity of the tasks will establish the difficulty level of the writing assignment.
3. For each task, there should be a specific directive to students to plan for and look up (e.g., in dictionary, reference grammar, verb lists, computer program) the **functional**, **lexical**, and/or **grammatical** information necessary to carry out the task.

Example:

Situation: You are writing a description of yourself for a catalogue of email pen pals. Later you will read other students' descriptions and choose a pen pal to whom you will write.

Tasks:

1. Give your name and age.
Function: introducing yourself
2. Describe yourself physically.
Function: describing yourself
Vocabulary: body parts, eye colors, hair colors
Grammar: adjectives, adjective agreement, adjective placement (Romance languages)
3. Describe your personality
Grammar: adjectives
4. Indicate your areas of interest
Function: talking about likes and dislikes
Vocabulary: studies, sports, leisure activities
5. Conclude with a statement explaining how you feel about studying the FL
Function: expressing an opinion

DEVELOPMENTAL WRITING PROGRAM (Scott 1992)

DESCRIPTION

Situation: You have been asked to write a description of yourself for the new student files.

First-year tasks

- 1. Give name, age, nationality
- 2. Describe yourself physically.
- 3. Tell 3 things you like to do and 3 things you don't like to do.

Second-year tasks

- 1. Give name, age, nationality.
- 2. Describe your appearance and personality.
- 3. Tell at least 5 things you like and do not like about your academic and leisure activities.

Third-year tasks

- 1. Give name, age, nationality.
- 2. Describe yourself in detail.
- 3. Indicate your likes and dislikes.
- 4. Tell what you will do after you finish school.

NARRATION

Situation: Imagine that you went on a trip to _____ with your family for the last school vacation. You are writing to your pen pal to tell about your trip.

First-year tasks

- 1. Tell where you went.
- 2. Tell three things you did.
- 3. Tell three things you did not do.

Second-year tasks

- 1. Tell where you went and how you felt.
- 2. Tell what happened and how you felt.
- 3. Tell what you will do on your next visit.

Third-year tasks

- 1. Tell where you went and why.
- 2. Tell what happened, whom you were with, and how you felt.
- 3. Evaluate your visit and explain why you will or will not go back to the same place again.

DEVELOPMENTAL WRITING PROGRAM con't. (Scott 1992)

EXPOSITION

Situation: Read the following text and write a short paper.

First-year tasks

- 1. Write a sentence that summarizes the main idea.
- 2. Write three reasons why you think this is the main idea.
- 3. Conclude with a personal opinion about the text.

Second-year tasks

- 1. Write 2 sentences that summarize the main idea.
- 2. Mention the specific aspects of the text that you like and/or do not like.
- 3. Conclude with a personal opinion about the text and explain your opinion.

Third-year tasks

- 1. Summarize the main idea.
- 2. Explain specifically how the author communicates the message.
- 3. Discuss the specific language and imagery in the text.
- 4. Conclude with an evaluation of the text.

ARGUMENTATION

Situation: Write an article arguing for or against the following statement: **Americans are obsessed with physical exercise.**

First-year tasks

- 1. Introduce the subject.
- 2. State your opinion.
- 3. Explain why you believe this.
- 4. Conclude with a restatement of the subject.

Second-year tasks

- 1. Introduce the subject and state your opinion.
- 2. Support your opinion with three facts.
- 3. Suggest why Americans are (not) this way.
- 4. Conclude by showing how your argument proves your point.

Third-year tasks

- 1. Introduce the subject, explain your opinion, and explain why you believe this.
- 2. Support your opinion by citing facts.
- 3. Suggest why Americans are (not) this way and give another informed opinion (e.g., a coach, a doctor).
- 4. Give an opposing view.
- 5. Conclude with persuasive statements that prove your point.

CREATING A WRITING ACTIVITY USING SCOTT'S FRAMEWORK

Situation

Tasks:

1.

Function: *to inform*

Vocabulary:

Grammar:

2.

Function:

Vocabulary:

Grammar:

3.

Function:

Vocabulary

Grammar:

4.

Function: *to persuade*

Vocabulary:

Grammar:

5.

Function:

Vocabulary:

Grammar:

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SEQUENCING A WRITING ACTIVITY ACROSS LEVELS (using Scott's [1992] framework)

Situation:

First-year tasks:

Second-year tasks:

Third-year tasks:

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Writing Activity at the University of Iowa: Elementary Spanish Review

WRITING ACTIVITY #1: LA FAMILIA [the family]

Pre-writing activity (instructions/note sheet for students)

Directions. Interview your partner to find out everything you can about his or her family. Some questions are listed below to give you some ideas about what to ask. Get lots of information and take good notes, since you will need the information for the Writing Activity in class tomorrow.

Mi compañero/a se llama _____. Su teléfono es _____.

1. ¿Cuántas personas hay en tu familia? ¿Quiénes son?
[How many people are there in your family? Who are they?]
2. ¿Cuántos hermanos tienes? ¿Quién es el mayor? ¿Quién es el menor? ¿Dónde estás tú en el orden?
[How many brothers and sisters do you have? Who is the oldest? The youngest? Where are you in the birth order?]
3. ¿Dónde viven? Los hijos adultos, ¿viven con los padres, o no?
[Where do your brothers and sisters live? If there are adult children in your family, do they live with your parents?]
4. ¿Cómo son tus padres? ¿En qué trabajan? ¿Qué hacen para divertirse?
[What are your parents like? What are their occupations? What do they do for fun?]
5. Muchas personas dicen que el orden de nacimiento (*birth order*) de los hijos en la familia determina su personalidad: el mayor es trabajador y responsable, el menor es inmaduro y mimado (*spoiled*), y el que está en medio es el mediador (*mediator*) de la familia.) ¿Es verdad en tu familia? ¿Cómo son tú y tus hermanos en términos de personalidad?
[Many people think that the birth order of children in a family determines their personalities: the oldest is hard working and responsible, the youngest is immature and spoiled, and the middle child is the family mediator. Is this true in your family? What are you and your siblings like in terms of personality?]
6. ¿Son ustedes una familia unida? ¿Se reúnen (*get together*) con frecuencia con los abuelos, los tíos, los primos? ¿Cómo son estas reuniones? ¿Qué hacen ustedes para divertirse?
[Do you have a close-knit family? Do you get together often with your grandparents, aunts and uncles, cousins? What are these gatherings like? What do you all do together for fun?]

35:05 WRITING ACTIVITY #1
LA FAMILIA (instructions for instructors)

1. Pre-writing activity (day before the writing activity)

Put students in pairs. Read through the questions with them. Make sure they understand that they need to pay attention to the activity, get lots of information and take good notes, because they will need the information for the Writing Activity the next day.

Whatever time you devote to the activity, when the time is half used up, tell students to switch if they have not already done so, to give the other person a chance to ask questions.

Tell students that they must bring their notes back to class with them tomorrow, and that they will hand their notes in with their composition. They may call their partner tonight to continue to exchange information if they wish. They can take all the notes they want, but should **not** write out their composition ahead of time. (It is not a good idea anyway, since they don't know what they are going to have to write about.)

Needless to say, **do NOT tell students on the pre-writing day how they are going to have to use the information in their compositions.**

2. Writing activity

[If a student forgets to bring in his/her notes, that student will have to do a composition on a different topic -- see below -- and the grade will automatically be lower.]

Topic: Mi compañero(a) y yo: Dos familias diferentes [My partner and I: Two different families]

Students will write a composition in which they describe their partner's family, according to the information they received yesterday, and compare that family to their own family. They should write about similarities and differences. Suggested format: See attached master for a transparency.

3. **Scoring:** 25 points -- 15 points for content and 10 points for accuracy. **Content** consists of organization, coherence, information, detail, length, effort; **Accuracy** consists of care with grammar points we have covered so far -- verb conjugations primarily, use of certain phrases from the vocabulary. **Note: Tell students what the weight is (15 points for content), list on the board what you mean by "Content" (see above) and stress to them the importance of writing with effort and organization.**

Scales: For **content**, use this scale:

- 13-15 Very good to excellent (reserve 14 and 15 for only the top 1-2 students)
- 10-12 Good (10 is okay, 12 is pretty good)
- 7-9 Weak (7 is very weak, 9 is marginal)
- 6 and below: Truly terrible

For **accuracy**, use this scale:

- 9-10 Very good to excellent
- 8 Good
- 7 Weak
- 6 Very poor
- Below 6 is of F quality (i.e., unacceptable for the level)

Topic: Mi compañero(a) y yo: Dos familias diferentes

(guidelines for students to organize their compositions)

Your composition will have three parts:

1. Start with a **topic sentence** that characterizes your partner's family. Write 1-2 paragraphs about your partner's family.

2. Write another **topic sentence** that compares your family to your partner's family. Then write 1-2 paragraphs in which you develop the comparisons, writing about your own family.

3. Write a short **concluding paragraph** in which you summarize your main comparisons.

OJO: Now make sure that your composition has an interesting title that gives a good idea of the content.

**Writing Activity for Second-Year Spanish Students at the University of Iowa:
Integrating Visual Arts, Poetry, and Personal Writing**

**WRITING ACTIVITY #4: La identidad (based on "Las dos Fridas", *Conexiones* p. 133)
(Information for instructors)**

Day 1: Activities on "Las dos Fridas"

This is the day devoted to the theme of identity in the arts: Students study "Las dos Fridas," listen to "Soy," and do a pre-reading introduction to the poem "A Julia de Burgos." When you are working with the painting, have students **describe** what they see, and then **analyze** the differences between the two Fridas. Students who are pre-med or who study biology can talk about the heart and the veins, and provide information that may help to get at symbols and meanings. Tell students that the Writing Activity #4 will be related to this painting. Question #5 (Act. 4-5, p. 133) will be good background for the writing activity, so try to spend time on it.

Day 2: Pre-writing activity

This is the day devoted to the poem "A Julia de Burgos." Like Frida in the painting, the speaker in the poem has two identities, and in the poem addresses her other identity and describes the dualities. In your work on the poem, you can have students list the differences between the two Julias, just as you did with the two Fridas in the painting the day before.

In the pre-writing activity, tell students that they are going to write about themselves in the same way: describe what they consider to be their primary, "public" self, and then their more personal "inner" self. Get them started on thinking about how they would paint or describe this "inner" self. You may also want to go back to the drawing on p. 134 of the girl looking at herself in the mirror, and the image that looks back at her. This may provide an example of the kinds of dualities that students can consider, but they should not limit themselves to the obvious topic of glamour and superficial beauty.

Tell students that they can continue to work on their list of their two identities, and that they should spend some time thinking about the two Fridas and looking at their notes from that discussion in class. When they write their compositions, they may have only their lists with them as notes. Lists of phrases and words that describe their identities are fine as notes, but **no connected prose or already-written paragraphs are permitted**. Make this distinction clear to them. **IMPORTANT NOTE: Tell students to bring their books to class for Writing day, since they will want to refer to the painting.**

Day 3: Writing day

Students will spend the entire class writing. The title of their essays will be "Mi identidad: Los/Las dos _____ (their name)." Write this title and the outline below on a transparency or on the board, and leave it up for them while they write. Go through the outline briefly with them, and show them how following this outline will help them to write an organized composition.

Stress to students that they need to express their ideas as clearly and simply as possible, to guarantee that they are writing in Spanish that they know, so that they can be understood. Half of the credit for the composition is devoted to coherence, clarity, and organization, so they will be helping themselves to have a good opening paragraph, make their points clearly, and write a conclusion.

While they write, you need to circulate, and check that they are using their books to refer to the painting, but make sure that they have only their lists of their two identities with them. Intervene immediately with anyone who appears to be copying from a pre-written composition.]

Los/Las dos _____

(guidelines given to students)

Párrafo 1: Introducción al tema de las dos identidades [Par. 1: Introduction to the theme of two identities]

Párrafo 2: “Las dos Fridas” [Par. 2: “The two Fridas”]

- * **Descripción** de las dos Fridas en el cuadro. [description of the two Fridas in the painting]
- * **Análisis:** Significado de las diferencias entre las dos Fridas [meaning of the differences between the two Fridas in the painting]

Párrafo 3: Los/Las dos identidades mías [Par. 3: my two identities]

- * **Descripción** del “yo” que presento al mundo; el “yo” que mis amigos CONOCEN [description of the self that I present to the world; the self that my friends know]
- * **Mi otra identidad:** Quién yo soy en mis fantasías, mis sueños [my other identity: who I am in my fantasies, my dreams]

Párrafo 4: Conclusión [Par. 4: Conclusion]

- * **Semejanzas y diferencias** entre cómo Frida Kahlo representa sus dos identidades y cómo yo lo hago [Similarities and differences between how Frida Kahlo represents her two identities and how I do it]
- * **Importancia de examinarse a uno mismo** (*examine oneself*) [the importance of self-reflection]

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35:11 (Intermediate Spanish I)

Writing Activity #4: "Mis dos identidades"

Correction Guide (for instructors)

Each of the Writing Activities in 35:11 is worth 30 points. We will divide the points this way: 15 points for content, and 15 points for the quality of the language. This is a relatively difficult assignment, so in terms of content, do not expect anything profound. Instead, look for coherent discussion of the painting and definite ideas about oneself.

First, read the composition through for **content**, referring always to the topic. Students who have stated the importance of engaging in self-reflection and have coherently described the dualities in the painting and in themselves will be well on their way to getting their content points. As you read, ask yourself these questions:

- * In paragraph 1, does the writer introduce the topic of dual identities?
- * In paragraph 2, is there a good description of the two Fridas? Does the writer refer to a number of details in the painting?
- * In paragraph 2, is there a discussion or analysis of the details? Does the writer attribute meaning to details of the painting?
- * In paragraph 3, does the writer describe himself or herself in a coherent way? Is there a clear distinction between the two selves that are described?
- * In paragraph 4, does the student give the essay an overall shape? Can you understand what the student is trying to say at the level of ideas?
- * Does the student make reference to specific uses of language – images, metaphors, rhythm, etc.? Are these references specific, rather than general? (Be alert for "paja.")

Your next step is to give the paper a score for content, using the scale below. The descriptions will not fit all papers, of course, so you will want to add notes to your copy of the scale level descriptions according to what you find in the papers in your group. Please revise the scale for me, so that I can make it better for the next time we use this topic or one similar to it. Also, note that there are 3 score points within each level. Use them carefully, and try to articulate reasons to yourself for giving a paper a 12 rather than an 11, and write those reasons down. All of this will help you be as consistent as possible from student to student within your group.

Content, Organization, Coherence

13-15: Writer has responded well to the questions implied or stated in the topic (the prompt). The opening paragraph explains the theme of the poem and may give some biographical information about the poet to explain the social and historical context. There is a good summary of the main ideas and tone of the poem. The writer mentions images, metaphors, symbols, and supplies evidence from the text and is specific. Writing is coherent and comprehensible throughout. Overall impression is one of coherence and organization. The reading of the poem is responsive to the text (not off the wall).

10-12: Paragraph structure is clearly evident, but introduction and conclusion and/or coherence of individual paragraphs may be weak in places. Use of surface-level translation strategy causes meaning to break down in places. Length is adequate or marginally adequate. Provides some information about the poem, makes reference to images and metaphors, but there is a lack of specificity. Writing tends to be general, rather than detailed and specific. The topic is not fully addressed.

8-9: Weak organization and coherence. Shows evidence of "stream-of-consciousness" writing, rather than thoughtful organization. Considerable use of surface-level translation strategy causes frequent breakdowns of meaning. Clearly too short to do justice to the topic. Needs details and examples, which may be seriously lacking.

1-7: Virtually no coherence or organization. Meaning may frequently be hard to decipher. Very poor in terms of content and length.

Now read the paper again for **quality of the language**. By this, we mean the selection of words, noun-adjective agreement, verb endings, appropriate tense usage. You will have noted in the content score language that is hardly Spanish, but rather just English writing in Spanish words (sort of). Students need to be shown often that it is better to express themselves very simply in the Spanish they know than to think in more complex English sentences and try to translate them into Spanish. The result is always poor (the "yo lata mosca" syndrome). So this kind of writing will make them lose points on both the content/coherence scale and the quality of language scale.

Use the following scale when you score for quality of language. Note that, as with content and organization, there is room for judgment and degrees of performance. Be sure to keep notes for yourself on the features of your students' compositions that help you distinguish between score points.

Quality of Language

13-15: Accuracy in vocabulary and structure is quite good, although there may be some errors, particularly in structures beyond the student's level. Do not penalize for errors that result from risk-taking of this type, although be sure to distinguish in your own mind the effort to express oneself in more complex grammar and the recoding into Spanish of English prose.

10-12: Accuracy in vocabulary and structure is acceptable, but there will be a good number of errors in structures that the student has known and used for a long time.

8-9: Accuracy in vocabulary and structure is weak, with errors in almost every sentence.

1-7: Very poor in all ways. Error-ridden and difficult to understand.

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Two writing Samples: Elementary Spanish Review

Background information about the course and the student population

The General Education requirement in foreign language is fulfilled when a student passes the fourth-semester course. It is possible to fulfill the requirement by studying four years of a language in high school, or by getting a qualifying score on a locally developed placement test. Students who do not fulfill the requirement before entering the university may continue with the language they studied in high school or may start a new language here. Most entering students who choose to continue their study of high school Spanish place into one of two courses: Elementary Spanish Review or Intermediate Spanish I.

Elementary Spanish Review is composed entirely of students who have studied Spanish in high school for two years or longer but who are not yet ready for Intermediate Spanish. Elementary Spanish Review is their first the course is characterized by a wide range of student profiles. In a section of 20 students, some may have allowed several years to pass since their last Spanish class in high school; others may not have taken their high school Spanish study seriously; still others could have started with Intermediate Spanish I, but prefer to start with a course at the elementary level to consolidate their skills and knowledge.

Elementary Spanish Review classes, which meet daily for 50 minutes, are conducted entirely in Spanish. The course carries 5 semester hours of credit. Course materials include a textbook, workbook, lab manual with audio tapes, web site, and video. Students are expected to spend at least 2 hours per day outside of class studying on their own and completing homework assignments.

Writing in Elementary Spanish Review

The formal writing component of the course consists of four essays, all of which are written during one class period. Each writing activity is linked to a course theme and (tangentially) to structures that are taught in that segment of the course. Some writing activities, like the one from which the work samples below are drawn, involve interviewing a classmate and then incorporating the information obtained through the interview into the essay.

Explanation of the writing activity from which the samples of student work come:

This writing activity takes place shortly before the midpoint of the semester (week 6). First, students read and discuss in class an article on healthful eating. Then they interview a partner about his or her eating habits. Following guidelines suggested by the article, students find out as much as they can about what their partner eats on a regular basis for meals and snacks. Then, the following day, they write in class an essay in which they describe their partner's diet and analyze it for healthfulness (or lack thereof) according to the information in the article. [Note: If a student missed the previous day's class (and therefore has no partner), that student should write about his/her own diet and otherwise follow the guidelines below.]

The guidelines for writing are as follows:

Writing Activity #2: ¿Come inteligentemente mi compañero/-a de clase?

Your composition will have four parts:

- * An opening paragraph, in which you briefly explain the importance of having a good diet, and make a transition to the second paragraph
- * A detailed description of your partner's eating habits
- * An analysis of your partner's diet in terms of the criteria in "Coma inteligente ¡y viva más!."
- * A brief conclusion

Elementary Spanish Review: Writing Sample 1

Es más importante come la dieta regular. Querie evitar almuerzos con mucha grasa, sal, y colesterol. Si hago este puedo viva más.

Mi companero de clase es Nick. Nick tiene una dieta muy mala. El no come desayuno casi nunca. Para almuerzo el come hamburgeasa con queso y papas fritos. Tipicalmente Nick come una pizza para las cenas.

La dieta de Nick es muy mala pero tipicalmente de estudiantes. Nick come muchos almuerzos con muchas grasas, sal, y colesterol. Necesita el come unas frutas y vegetales. Necesita come menos carne y queso tambien.

Un menú ideal consiste de todos. Para desayuno come cereal con leche descremada y un vaso de jugo. Para almuerzo come una ensalada con no aliño o come la sopa. Para la cena come pescado y arroz y vegetales y ensalada. Si desea la merienda come las frutas manzanas.

Está facil hablar almuerzos bueno pero no es facil hacer siempre. Por ejemplo mi dieta es tanta mala como mí companero Nick.

Elementary Spanish Review: Writing Sample 2

Es muy importante que las personas tienen una dieta muy buena. Necesitan muchos nutrientes y poco grasa, sal, y colesterol para una vida buena y larga. Muchas personas la conocen pero no tienen una dieta buena. Aquí está la dieta de mi amiga, Kari.

Kari tiene una dieta regular. Es más buena que mala, pero ella necesita más nutrientes. Kari debe eliminar nada de su dieta. Todo la comida que Kari come es buena y conjunto de nutrientes. Kari necesita comer mucho carne más porque ella no lo come. También, ella debe comer más pescado porque no lo come. Pero, Kari no le gusta pescado. Kari le gusta pan mucho. Ella come mucho. Pero, necesita comer un poco más para una buena dieta. Kari debe comer más arroz y más verduras también.

“Coma inteligente ¡y vida más!” dice que es importante que las personas tienen una dieta buena. Dice que las _____ no deben comer grasa, sal, y colesterol. Kari no come comida mala. No come mucho grasa, sal, o colesterol. Ella come cinco raciones de frutas todos los días, pero ella necesita comer dos más raciones de verduras todos los días porque necesita seis raciones. También, Kari bebe la leche descremada y el artículo nos dice que la es buena y no tiene mucha grasa. Kari no come las yemas de huevos porque tienen mucho colesterol. Pero, ella come las claras con mucha proteína. Kari debe comer más carne con color de mármol porque es muy importante y ella no lo come. Tambien, ella debe comer pescado.

En conclusión, Kari tiene una dieta regular pero necesita más de las comidas importantes con nutrientes. Ella tiene una dieta más buena que yo. No tenho una dieta buena. Me gusta más las comidas con grasa y sal. También, hay mala comida en mi resedencia y no la como.

Two writing Samples: Intermediate Spanish I

Background information about the course and the student population

The General Education requirement in foreign language is fulfilled when a student passes the fourth-semester course. It is possible to fulfill the requirement by studying four years of a language in high school, or by getting a qualifying score on a locally developed placement test. Students who do not fulfill the requirement before entering the university may continue with the language they studied in high school or may start a new language here. Most entering students who choose to continue their study of high school Spanish place into one of two courses: Elementary Spanish Review or Intermediate Spanish I.

Students in a given section of Intermediate Spanish I are composed of two groups: those who have placed into this course directly from high school, and those who have taken one or more previous Spanish courses (usually only Elementary Spanish Review) at the UI before proceeding on to Intermediate Spanish I.

Intermediate Spanish I classes, which meet daily for 50 minutes, are conducted entirely in Spanish. The course carries 4 semester hours of credit. Course materials include a textbook, workbook, lab manual with audio tapes, web site, and video. Students are expected to spend 1-2 hours per day outside of class studying on their own and completing homework assignments.

Writing in Intermediate Spanish I

The formal writing component of the course consists of five essays, all of which are written during one class period. Each writing activity is linked to a literary text and, through the text, to the overall theme of a particular chapter in the textbook. The essays are written as a single draft, and each writing activity is preceded by a day of pre-writing activity that is connected to a discussion of the literary text.

Explanation of the writing activity from which the samples of student work come:

This writing activity takes place in the middle of the semester (week 8). First, students read and discuss in class a portion of Rigoberta Menchu's *Y así me nació la conciencia* (*I, Rigoberta Menchu*), in which she writes about how she became aware of the oppression and violence under which her family and all indigenous people were living. In the subsequent writing activity, students are asked to compose their own "autobiography" with a focus on the birth and development of a central value in their lives.

After some pre-writing activity in which students talk about their values and how their commitment to these values began, they write their essays. The writing is done in a single 50-minute class session. The pre-writing materials and guidelines for writing are as follows:

Mi (mini-)autobiografía: . . . y así me nació la conciencia

Pre-writing stage:

Propósito del ensayo:

1. Presentar el valor ético más importante en mi vida

* qué valor

* por qué este valor (y no otro)

2. Explicar de dónde proviene la conciencia de este valor, por medio de un incidente

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0124-20

- * pensar en 1-2 incidentes claves relacionados con el comienzo / desarrollo de este valor
- * explicar en una frase el significado del incidente

Guidelines for writing (students can refer to them while they write):

Par. 1: Auto-presentación (Yo como una persona de conciencia): quién eres, de dónde eres, y cuál es el valor central de tu vida sobre el que vas a escribir

Par. 2-3: Historia de 1-2 incidentes importantes que te han ayudado a formarte como una persona de conciencia

Conclusión: Reflexión en tu pasado y explicar cómo tus valores y creencias éticas seguirán madurando en el futuro

English translation:

My (mini) autobiography: "And thus was my consciousness born"

Pre-writing stage:

Purpose of the essay:

1. Present the most important ethical value in my life

- * what value
- * why this value (and not another one)

2. By means of an incident, explain the origins of your consciousness of this value

- * Think of 1-2 important incidents related to the beginning/development of the value
- * Explain in one sentence the significance of the incident(s)

Guidelines for writing:

Par. 1: Self-presentation (I, a person with values): who you are, where you are from, and what central value of your life you will write about

Par. 2-3: Story of 1-2 important incidents that have helped you to become a person of values

Conclusion: Reflection about your past and explanation of how your values and ethical beliefs will continue to develop in the future.

Writing Sample 1 for Intermediate Spanish I

“El trabajador concienzudo a mi”

Hola. Me llamo Mike. Soy de Freeport, Illinois, un ciudad poca en el noroeste de Illinois. Yo he vivido allí toda mi vida. Una cosa yo siempre pienso que es un rasgo importante, es ser un trabajador concienzudo. Es un rasgo que mis padres me enseñaban cuando era joven.

El primero lugar, yo ayudaba mi padre cortar la césped en el verano y mover la nieve en el invierno. Yo ayudaba con nuestro césped y camino de entrada y tambien, la césped y la camino de entrada de la vecina. Yo ganaba 10 dolares cada tiempo yo trabajaba.

Un otro lugar de mi ética trabajo hacía cuando you tenía una ruta del periódico. Yo tenía la ruta por dos años. Yo aprendaba muchas cosas porque de mi ruta del periódico como la importancia del dinero. Porque yo aprendaba ahorrar el dinero yo podía comprar muchas cosas. Yo compré una televisión, un grabador de video, y un tocadiscos compacto con mi dinero ganaba de la ruta periódico.

Para mi ética del trabajo, mis padres son responsable. Yo los miraba y aprendaba a estaba mirandolos. El trabajador concienzudo rasgo a mi ayudará durante el resto de mi tiempo a la universidad. Tambien, me ayudará buscar el trabajo que yo quiero y yo espero que seré contento.

Writing Sample 2 for Intermediate Spanish I

Me llamo James. Soy de Marion, Iowa en los Estados Unidos. Una cosa más importante en mi vida es tener un actitud positivo. Desde entonces era niño mis padres siempre me animaron hacer cosas nuevas. Jugué muchos deportes, por ejemplo--fútbol americano, juego de bolos, baloncesto, y beisbol. Hací muchas otras cosas además deportes. Pertenebí a los niños exploradores de America, equipo de nadar y grupos de arte diferentes.

Cuando era más joven no descontinué nada. Mis padres me digaron “Si empieces algo tú lo acabado.” Este es muy importante. Hoy no descontinuo nada.

Cuando tuvo catorce años empecía luchar. Mu gusta el deporte mucho pero no sea bueno. Trabajé mucho, pero y perdido mucho. Entonces después de mi primero año en luchar yo fui a escuela de segunda. Lucharía por cuatro años en el equipo de universitario. Este deporte sea importante porque enseñé no descontinuar.

Mi abuelo es una persona importante en mi vida. Él me enseñó pacientes. Fuimos pescar mucho y siempre me digó cosas diferentes.

En mi futuro será próspero en todas cosas que hago. Conozco cómo trabajar asiduo. Cuando cosas son malas, es importante permanecer positivo. Un cada día es muy precioso. Ensayo hacer el mejor de todos días. ¡Yo pude muerto mañana!

EVALUATION OF WRITING: PRINCIPLES, ISSUES, and PROBLEMS

1. If we teach writing as a process, should we test writing as a process?

- * **General principle:** We should test **what** we teach and **how** we teach it.
- * **Timed tests of writing** are a poor substitute for repeated samplings of a learner's writing ability while not under the pressure of an exam situation. (Cohen 1994)
- * **Practical considerations:** We can't have multiple drafts on the final exam.

2. How should we evaluate?

- * **Holistic scoring:** A single, integrated score or writing behavior; response to the writing as a whole.
- * **Analytic scoring:** Separate scales, each assessing a different aspect of writing, e.g., content, organization, vocabulary, grammar, mechanics.
- * **Primary trait scoring:** Sharpens and narrows the criteria used in holistic scoring to the one specific thing that raters should look for in the writing samples; the scale is designed to fit the specific task at hand. Raters focus on one issue at a time.
- * **Multi-trait scoring:** Raters score for 3-4 facets or traits, which are picked to match instructional goals (e.g., ability to read a text and summarize it; consider both sides of an issue and argue on behalf of one position); prompt is developed to fit.

3. How do we adapt these evaluation models to our teaching contexts?

- * **Teachers generally work alone:** Is this desirable? Is it feasible to evaluate writing in a group?
- * **Time factor:** Too many papers to correct, and so little time.

4. What about error correction?

- * **Research on this topic** is not definitive, but it looks like we can lighten up on the red pen without harming our students at all. (This will be a time-saver.)
- * **How realistic is peer editing/peer correction?**
- * **What should we correct?**

5. Portfolio assessment of writing (Multiple measures of a student's writing; a representative sample, not a one-shot test). Types of portfolios:

- * **Scrapbook portfolio:** Can contain everything the student has produced or the same sample for all (e.g., the March 1, April 15, and May 10 writing assignments).
- * **Best work portfolio:** Student chooses own selections; writes reflective "one-pagers" to introduce each piece and reflect on individual changes as a writer.
- * **Process portfolio:** The portfolio includes multiple drafts of the same piece of writing; may include reflective one-pagers that explain the changes made from one draft to the next.

ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF EVALUATION MODELS
(adapted from Cohen 1994)

Holistic scoring

Advantages

- 1. Puts emphasis on what is done well, not on deficiencies.
- 2. Teachers can assign extra or exclusive weight to certain assessment criteria.
- 3. Since holistic scoring requires a response to the writing as a whole, students do not risk being assessed solely on one, possibly lesser feature.

Disadvantages

- 1. One score does not provide diagnostic information.
- 2. It is difficult to justify the score to students or even to other raters (if scoring in a group).
- 3. Students are penalized for efforts at development (risk-taking), since they may display only novice ability with more complex forms, while those who stick to very simple expressions may get higher ratings.
- 4. Reducing a score to one rating reduces reliability.
- 5. The rating scale may confound writing ability with language ability.

Analytic scoring

Advantages

- 1. Analytic scales guard against collapsing of categories; i.e., both strengths and weaknesses are taken into account.
- 2. Training of raters (and consistency) is easier when there is an explicit set of analytical scales.

Disadvantages

- 1. Writing is more than the sum of its parts.
- 2. It is hard to keep the scales separate; very easy for rating on one scale to influence rating on another.
- 3. Use of analytic scales may favor writing in which the scalable information can be extracted quickly.

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ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF EVALUATION MODELS (con't)
(adapted from Cohen 1994)

Primary trait scoring

Advantages

1. Represents a sharpening and narrowing of criteria intended for holistic scoring.
2. Detailed attention to just certain aspects of writing allows for attention to one issue at a time.
3. The approach supports teachers' knowledge that it is difficult to look at everything at once.

Disadvantages

1. Students may have trouble focusing exclusively on the targeted trait while writing. Their scores may suffer if they are creative or write good compositions that are not quite on the topic.
2. By measuring only one aspect of writing, this approach may not be integrative enough, given the task at hand.
3. An excellent partial response may get fewer points than a weaker essay that touches more bases.

Multitrait scoring

Advantages

1. The traits can reflect specific aspects of the particular writing task.
2. Allows for flexibility in scoring in cases where the writer takes a novel approach and does something different from what was expected.
3. Validity is improved because the traits chosen/developed are based on expectations in a particular setting, e.g., high school, beginning-level college students.
4. The ratings provide more diagnostic information.
5. There is a positive washback effect on teaching and learning.

Disadvantages

1. It may be hard to identify the best traits for the given context.
2. If the traits are specific to a particular context, the scorers may inadvertently fall back into generalized concept when they score.

ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF EVALUATION MODELS
(adapted from Cohen 1994)

Portfolios

Advantages

- 1. Better reflection of the complexity of the writing process than conventional writing tests.
- 2. Portfolio approach encourages students to use their teachers and fellow students as resources, while on tests students are not allowed to ask for help. Fosters a sense of community.
- 3. Portfolio approach encourages students to review, revise, reflect on their own work.
- 4. Students evaluate themselves and, in so doing, collaborate in the grading process.

Disadvantages

- 1. Time-consuming for teachers.
- 2. Given the time and attention devoted to a portfolio, it is very hard to fail anyone. This is a problem for school politics, since it gives the impression of "pampering students."
- 3. Hard for teacher to switch gears from "mentor/coach" to "objective evaluator."
- 4. Promise is not being fulfilled: Important study of what portfolio readers actually do (e.g., Hamp-Lyons & Condon 1993) showed that they read only a small portion, assumed that writing skill is unitary, and did not show awareness of variation of genres in a portfolio.

Evaluating Writing: An exercise to compare evaluation models

0124-26

Task: Read two brief articles with conflicting views on the same theme treated academically ("Brain structure explains male/female differences" and "Brain structure does not explain male/female differences"). You are to role-play a professor who had taken a public stand in favor of the views expressed in one of the articles (whichever you wish), but now you have found irrefutable evidence to favor the views expressed in the other article. So the task is now to summarize both articles, indicate the position you now take, and admit your error in having previously taken the opposite position.

Essay 1

Written by a female Thai-speaking advanced-Intermediate ESL graduate student:

Artical of Daniel Goleman said that differences anatomical structure between men's and women's brains. Women on average have superior verbal abilities to men. Men on average tend to be better than women on certain spatial relationship. According to, this artical was supported by Dr. Witelson. He found the part of the brain of women. The larger isthmus in women is thought to be related to women's superiority on some tests of verbal intelligence and the isthmus might have to do with the advantage of men on test of spatial relations.

Artical of Anne Fausto-Sterling said that human have two brains, the left hemisphere of the brain appears specialized to carry out analysis, computation and sequential tasks, in the right half resides artistic, abilities and emotional. The idea of brain hemisphere specialization said nothing about sex differences. But not long after scientists to suggest that left-right brain hemisphere could explain supposed male or female difference in verbal, spatial and mathematical ability.

My opinion: I'm agree with "Brain Structure Explains Male/Female Differences" because Part of the brain of female is excellence in verbal task. It is developing more than this part of male and Brain of male is skill in spatial visualization. It is developing more than this brain of female. However, experience and learning are its crucial skill for male and female.

Essay 2

Written by a female Korean-speaking advanced-Intermediate ESL graduate student:

Researchers who believe difference in men and women had a question about recovery rate of brain damage. They found sex difference in brain structure. They discovered that women dominated verbal ability and men dominated geometric/imaginary ability. They insisted that this ability difference is due to anatomical differences. But it doesn't mean brain size difference. One study involved that blood supply to brain. This sex difference discovery will help that doctor and other health team provide a difference therapy to women and men.

Researchers who believe no difference between men and women insisted that any reports can't prove difference in women and men. Any reports can't support their opinion. Although some different patterns of brain existed, it is weak evidence to support difference brain structure in men and women.

I believed that no difference existed between men and women. Because I am woman and I taught that any ability difference doesn't exist between men and women.

But now I think that some difference really exists in men and women's brain. Although human's brain structure veil mystery, I believe anatomical difference. And I consider to environmental influences, too. Because I think that any difference can't find in neonate. Brain structure is shaped one's growth. Girls like to play in indoor. For example, she plays with doll and cheats with other girlfriend. But boys like to play in outdoor. He likes to run around their town and forest.

I believe that anatomical difference exists in human's brain. But I don't think that sex germ doesn't have any difference.

Essay 3

Written by a male German-speaking advanced ESL graduate student:

Obviously there are male/female differences in verbal, spatial and mathematical ability. What are the reasons for these differences? There are different points of view. One part of the researchers which I belonged to for a long time supposes that these differences can be explained by anatomical differences in the brains of men and women. Others argue that these differences are due to social bias and environmental influences.

The theory of anatomical differences is supposed by some preliminary small-scale studies (for a summary see Goleman 1989). It was reported that parts of the corpus callosum connecting the left and the right hemispheres of the brain and isthmus connecting the verbal and spatial centers on the right and left hemispheres are larger in women than in men. That is thought to be related to women's superiority on some tests of verbal intelligence. The studies did not provide satisfactory explanations for men's superiority in tests of spatial relations until now.

It is a fact that women have better results in tests of verbal intelligence and men have better results in tests of spatial relations. But there is no reason to suppose that this is related to the differences in the division of labour between left and right hemisphere in women and men.

There are great differences in the mental abilities of different person of the equal sex, too. I think there much further research required. I tend to an explanation based on social bias and environmental influences.

Five-Minute Writing Storms (adapted from Ur & Wright 1992)

Type of writing: Expressive

Goals:

- * Encourage a writing culture in the FL classroom through frequent non-graded writing
- * Help students form the habit of writing about experiences, feelings, perceptions
- * Use last few minutes of class time productively

Procedure: Tell students that they have exactly 5 minutes to write about something. Pick a topic (examples given in box below) that will focus students' minds but will encourage personal expression, rather than impersonal or generalized responses. The topic should be at a level of difficulty that will be easy for students to write about.

Collect papers as students leave. For the next day, prepare some general comments and read sentences that show creativity, humor, detail, etc. (Do not focus on structural or lexical accuracy.)

Evaluation: Reward students for effort only. I suggest a 3-point scale: 3=very good effort (length, completeness); 2=average effort; 1=poor effort; 0=wrote nothing or only a few words.

Suggested topics:

- | |
|---|
| <p>5-minute writing storms</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * the best (worst) thing in today's class * something that is not fair * something that always makes me angry/sad/happy * a memory from my childhood * a place I know * a person I know * my favorite possession * something I hate (or love) doing * what is friendship? |
|---|

How many things can you think of that . . . ?

(adapted from Ur & Wright 1992)

Type of writing: Transcription

Goals:

- * Review and expand vocabulary
- * Organize vocabulary into semantic categories
- * Foster cooperative learning

Procedure: Write a question on the board (see samples in box below). Students work in groups to think of and write down as many things as possible that fit the criteria. Give them a time limit of 2-3 minutes.

After the time is up, pool all of the responses on the board, or have a competition to see which group can come up with the most items.

Suggested topics:

<p>How many things can you think of that . . . ?</p> <p>. . . are bigger than you are?</p> <p>. . . are rectangular?</p> <p>. . . are round?</p> <p>. . . run on electricity?</p> <p>. . . are made of wood?</p> <p>. . . you can use to sit on?</p> <p>. . . have wheels?</p>

0124-29

Music

(adapted from Ur & Wright 1992)

Type of writing: Expressive

Goals:

- * Encourage writing about feelings and impressions
- * Combine "recreation" (music), culture, and language skill development

Procedure: Play a cassette of music from the target culture. (Note that an audio cassette is better for this activity than a video.) Tell students that they will write 2-3 sentences about a particular topic, e.g., what color the music reminds them of and why. (See box for sample topics.)

Students get into small groups and read each other's sentences. Volunteers read their sentences to the whole class.

Note: You can use this piece of music for other activities, e.g., cloze exercise for listening comprehension/dictation.

Suggested topics:

<p>Music</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * What sort of person does the music remind you of? * What scene do you imagine while listening? * What emotion does the music call forth in you?

You write next!
(adapted from Ur & Wright 1992)

Type of writing: Group conversation/narrative

Goals:

- * Focus on coherence, connectors
- * Have fun

Procedure: Have every student take out a piece of paper and write a sentence at the top. It should be a statement of fact or an opinion, e.g., **Hoy es martes** or **Me gustan mucho las manzanas**. On a signal from you, everyone passes his/her paper to the right. Students receive a paper and respond in some way to the statement by writing a comment, question, or response. This process is repeated until there are five contributions on each piece of paper. In each round, the students read what others have written so that their contribution fits in coherently.

After five turns, students volunteer to read the results, which are often very amusing.

POETRY WRITING FOR BEGINNING STUDENTS

(from Omaggio Hadley, 1993; original source is Allen & Valette, 1977)

Task: Students, either individually, in small groups, or as a whole class, students create simple poems within a very structured framework, using vocabulary they have learned. A cinquain poem consists of five lines, constructed according to the following scheme:

Line 1: States a subject in 1 word (usually a noun).

Line 2: Describes the subject in 2 words (often a noun + an adjective).

Line 3: Describes an action about the subject in 3 words (often 3 infinitives or a 3-word phrase).

Line 4: Expresses an emotion about the subject in 4 words.

Line 5: Restates the subject in another single word that reflects what has already been said (usually a noun).

Sample poems in English, French, Spanish

Tree
Green branches
Growing, living reaching
Your shade protects me
Peace.

Chien
Optimiste perpetuel
Attend son maître
It entend des pas . . .
Joie!

Casa
Hogar sencillo
Necesita pintura, reparos
Llena de tantos recuerdos
Refugio

0124-31

ACTFL PRELIMINARY PROFICIENCY GUIDELINES: WRITING
 Revised 2001
 Summary of Features of Writing at Major Proficiency Levels

LEVEL	FUNCTIONS	CONTEXT/CONTENT	LINGUISTIC FEATURES	TEXT FEATURES
Superior	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Present and support opinions through cogent arguments and hypotheses • Complex summaries • Research papers and detailed reports • Topics treated abstractly and/or concretely 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formal and informal settings • Practical, social, professional topics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Control of structures • Control of general and specialized/professional vocabulary • Use of cohesive devices • Variety of sentence structures, syntax and vocabulary • No patterns of error to distract the reader 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extended (long) texts • Strong organization, presentation of main and secondary ideas
Advanced	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Routine (social) correspondence • Some formal correspondence • Narratives • Descriptions • Straightforward factual summaries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal and social topics • Work and school • Topics of current and general interest 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Control of major time frames (past, present, future) • Some control of aspect • Some use of cohesive devices. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Combine sentences into texts of paragraph length and structure
Intermediate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Simple messages and letters • Requests for information • Ask and respond to questions • Short descriptions • Take notes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Daily routines • Personal preferences • Common events • Work, school, home • Other topics of personal interest 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Control of present time • High-frequency vocabulary • Basic structures • Comprehensible to those accustomed to writing of non-natives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loosely connected series of sentences
Novice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Simple lists and notes • Fill out forms • Copy and transcribe 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Home and family • School • Other personal topics • Heavy reliance on memorized and formulaic words and phrases 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicate basic information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Words, phrases, formulaic language

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