THE TEACHING OF EFL WRITING AT THE UNIVERSITY OF COSTA RICA: A COMPREHENSIVE EXAMINATION BASED ON AN IDEOLOGICAL MODEL OF LITERACY

Xinia Rodríguez Ramírez*

ABSTRACT

This study provides a comprehensive examination of the teaching of English as a foreign language (EFL) writing at the University of Costa Rica based on the perspective of a pluralistic view of literacy. The EFL writing program at the School of Modern Languages (SML) is analyzed based on two literacy models: the autonomous and the ideological. The author proposes an ideological theory of EFL literacy in order to gain understanding about the rationale behind our teaching practices and to validate future curricular changes that are imperative to initiate.

Key words: English as a Foreign Language, pluralist view of literacy's perspective.

RESUMEN

El presente artículo es una investigación comprensiva sobre la enseñanza de la composición en el programa de Bachillerato en Inglés como Lengua Extranjera (EFL por sus siglas en inglés) de la Universidad de Costa Rica. El estudio, realizado en la Escuela de Lenguas Modernas, se basa en la perspectiva pluralista de la alfabetización en un segundo idioma. Se comparan dos modelos de alfabetización: el autónomo y el ideológico, proponiéndose este último para comprender mejor la forma en que se enseña la composición y para validar los futuros cambios curriculares que se deben iniciar.

Palabras clave: Inglés como lengua extranjera, perspectiva pluralista de la alfabetización.

1. Introduction and justification

The mastery of academic writing skills is one of the most important goals in the Bachelor's degree programs in English and in the Teaching of English (TESOL) at the University of Costa Rica (UCR). The current profile of the student holding a degree in English states that:

The student will:

A. Understand and express herself/himself correctly in the English language both orally and in writing.

B. Conduct research related to her/his field of study.

C. Self-monitor her/his language errors.

The importance of academic writing in our curriculum, as stated in these goals, suggests that we need to have a very clear understanding of the variables involved in the teaching/learning of second language writing (L2). When examining the historical developments and research issues in the field of L2 writing, Kroll (2003, p. 311) concludes that we, as ESL/EFL writing teachers, need to "explore ourselves" based on the broad issues that influence the teaching of writing, for instance, curriculum and methodological choi- ces, learner needs, types of

* Profesora de la Escuela de Lenguas Modernas, Universidad de Costa Rica. Correo electrónico: xiniarodri@yahoo.com

texts and genres, the role of teacher and student feedback, reading-writing relationships, the role of grammar, and the role of technology. Leki (2003) adds that the purpose that academic writing will have in our students' lives, besides the issues mentioned above, has to be even clearer in our minds. Zamel and Spack (1998), in their preface to the volume *Negotiating Academic Literacies*, take this exploratory step even further when they propose investigating the teaching of writing from the perspective of literacy and its relationship with culture. They assert that:

> As teachers and researchers, we have discovered that this perspective on language and culture applies not only to students who are still in the process of acquiring English but also to learners who find themselves in an academic si tuation that exposes them to *a new set of expectations*. We view this situation as a new culture, or rather, as various cultures, for when students travel from one classroom to another, they find that *each has its unique conventions, concepts, and terms*. . . . Collectively, classroom experiences across the curriculum require that students become *fluent in multiple ways of reading and writing*. In other words, students are expected to be conversant in *a variety of academic literacies* [emphasis mine]. (p. ix, x)

Based on these arguments, the present study offers a comprehensive analysis of the teaching of English composition at the University of Costa Rica based on two literacy models—the autonomous and the ideological—and proposes the perspective of an ideological theory of EFL literacy in order to: (a) gain understanding about the rationale behind our teaching practices and (b) provide guidelines that validate the curricular changes we need to make in the near future[i]. At the time of this study, no investigation of this sort has been published in Costa Rica.

2.   Background of the study

Céspedes, Rodríguez, Segura, Soto, and Ureña (1994, unpublished "Licenciatura" thesis) conducted a study at the School of Modern Languages (SML), arguing for a process-based methodology instead of the traditional product approach prevalent at that time. The purpose of the study was to "offer prospective composition instructors of LM-1232 [English Composition I, second-year level] a methodological guide that [lead] students to the eventual acquisition of the writing skills" (Céspedes et al., unpublished "Licenciatura" thesis, p. 8). The basic premise of our investigation was that by teaching students about the writing process—a methodological breakthrough in L2 writing at that time—(besides the regular instruction on rhetoric, punctuation, and structure), their writing skills would definitely improve, and results would be evident through a quasi-experimental study. In the end, the results we obtained after comparing the experimental group with the control one were not statistically significant. However, we were able to show better scores in the experimental group's post-tests than in those of the control group.

Although illuminating, the study had a drawback: seeking answers at the micro level only in an attempt to provide solutions to the problems in the composition class. In other words, in Céspedes et al. (1994, unpublished "Licenciatura" thesis), we viewed the teaching of academic writing as the search for an effective teaching method, as the following statement indicates:

> The concern for finding the best method for the teaching of writing has been changing over the last thirty years. The changes from audiolingual to cognitive to communicative methodologies are reflected in the teaching of writing as a second or foreign language (Raimes, 1987). (p. 2)

Writing is now viewed as a much broader activity influenced by ideological and socio-cultural aspects that teachers often overlook in the composition class (Johns, 1997, 2003; Kroll, 2003; Matsuda, 2003; Tannacito, 1995; Zamel & Spack, 1998).

Although the need for improvement in our composition curriculum at the SML is a recurrent subject of discussion in faculty meetings, it has not

been analyzed from a broad pespective. Our common reaction toward discrepancies in the curriculum and problems with student performance has been to seek for new methodologies and approaches with the hope that they provide the answers. However, rarely have we questioned the theory of literacy behind those classroom practices that we want to change (Johns, 1997). The literature states that when problems arise in the classroom, instructors usa- lly analyze them at the micro level, i.e. at the level of approaches, methodologies, techniques, tasks, and textbooks (Ferris & Hedgcock, 1998). As Larsen-Freeman points out (as cited in Richards & Nunan, 1990), seldom does the macro context in which these practices are embedded become the object of analysis among teachers as part of a self-directed exploration (Gebhard & Oprandy, 1999; Kroll, 2003) that offer new challenges and understandings.

Complaints about our senior and graduate students' lack of advanced academic writing skills are commonplace at the SML, as the following comment shows:

> My MA/TESOL students, all recently graduated from the ELM [Spanish acronym for School of Modern Languages], DO NOT KNOW HOW TO WRITE, let alone a formal paper. [emphasis in the original] (Anonymous, personal communication, June 29, 1999)

The author of this statement, a professor in our EFL program, voices a typical concern for a group of composition instructors, all highly re cognized and experienced, who were surveyed about the general situation of our composition courses (Rodríguez, 2000, unpublished Master's thesis). [ii] Five years after the full implementation of a process-based methodology, problems regarding the lack of advanced academic writing skills in many students are still a concern.

Paradoxically, a comment from another experienced professor who participated in this survey reflects a very different perspective about a second-year composition course:

> My experience teaching Composition 1 has been very nice and rewarding. I emphasized outlining, topic sentence, concluding statement, supporting sentences . . . . In both exams the students showed they had high command of the key aspects of the course. (Anonymous, personal communication, June 29, 1999)

From a macro perspective, these comments reveal conflicting views of second language literacy behind them. The latter quote subscribes to traditional theories that deal with the modes of writing (Connors, 1981; Ferris & Hedgcock, 1998; Grabe & Kaplan, 1996; Johns, 1997; Silva, 1990, 1993) and especially emphasize rhetorical organization (Matsuda, 2003; Silva, 1990). Such a view of literacy implies that mastering the rhetorical patterns is the most important key to writing successfully in an English academic setting. On the other hand, the former quote is related to a broad concept of academic literacy. Although not expressing it over- tly, this teacher probably agrees that writing well encompasses more than the mere mastering of rhetorical organization. Nonetheless, this person does not identify in this statement what exactly the students lack, which prevents them from writing well. They apparently lack not only mastery of form but also cultural literacy (Rose, 1998) and enough opportunities for the acquisition of discourses (Gee, 1998) or "the multiple ways of reading and writing" (Zamel & Spack, 1998, p. x) that we demand in the academia. Zamel and Spack (1998) explain the need to view literacy as a plurality:

> It is no longer possible to assume that there is one type of literacy in the academy. Academic literacy, which once denoted simply the ability to read and write college-level texts, now must embrace multiple approaches to knowledge. Hence, our use of the term academic *literacies* [emphasis in the original]. College classrooms have become sites where different languages and cultures intersect, including the various discourses of students, teachers, and researchers. In our experience, the result of this interaction, even when (and perhaps because) it involves struggle and conflict, is most often intellectual growth, for these different languages and cultures build on and give shape to one another. (p. ix)

Thus, the conflict within the English composition courses at the UCR requires an analysis of what it means to become literate in EFL given our particular academic, cultural, social, ideological, economic, and political contexts (Baynham, 1995; Gee, 1998; Johns, 1997; Perez, 1998; Street, 1984, 1995; Zamel & Spack, 1998). From this perspective, the assertion that students "do not know how to write" implies that, instead of labeling students as illiterate, it is necessary to understand the malleable nature of literacy and its varied implications for teaching. It is common in Costa Rica for many teachers to have false expectations about students' performance arising from an autonomous theory of literacy that conceives the teaching of reading and writing as a product that students are either capable of acquiring or not. In fact, another professor in the survey states, "Many professors believe one can't really teach students to write well, that 'they either have it' or they don't" (Anonymous, personal communication, March 25, 2000).

Yet, at the end of the four years of undergraduate studies at the UCR, the goal is to expect students to have acquired an advanced level of performance in academic writing that will easily lead them to pursue studies in our "Licenciatura" or graduate programs. This position views literacy as a single, ultimate stage that only the capable students will acquire, rather than as a set of literacies that are "acquired in di- fferent ways and for different purposes" (Johns 1997, p. 3) in "ongoing processes of perpetual transformation, dynamic and synthetic" (Neilsen, 1989 as cited in Johns, p. 3).

3. Questions of the study

Given this situation, the present study analyzes the teaching of English composition at the School of Modern Languages at the UCR from the perspective of an ideological model of academic literacy. The purpose of the study is to offer teachers a comprehensive view of writing that serve as a sound basis for improvement and change. The research questions are as stated below:

a.   What sources of knowledge does a pluralistic view of literacy provide so that we can have a broad perspective of the teaching of English as a foreign language (EFL) writing at college level in Costa Rica?

b.   How can we apply these new sources of knowledge within a comprehensive view of EFL literacy at the University of Costa Rica?

4.   What is literacy?

The working definition of literacy that will be used in the current study is based on the ideological position and refers to the set of rea- ding and writing practices that interrelate in the social contexts where the students are embedded, as members of a particular society and its institutions. Johns' (1997) definition very accurately portrays what literacy includes:

> The term [literacies] also encompasses ways of knowing particular content, languages, and practices. It refers to strategies for understanding, discussing, organizing, and producing texts. In addition, it relates to the social context in which a discourse is produced and the roles and communities of text readers and wri- ters. This inclusive concept encompasses learning processes as well as products, form as well as content, readers' as well as writers' roles and purposes. Literacy is also employed to refer to a variety of previous experiences, not only with texts, but with parents, teachers, and others who are literate (Gee, 1991; Heath, 1986). What this term does is integrate into one concept the many and varied social, historical, and cognitive influences on readers and writers as they attempt to process and produce texts. Admittedly, it is a complex and problematic term, but becoming literate, particularly in academic contexts, is even more complex and problematic. . . . (p. 2)

Although I acknowledge the obvious interrelationship between reading and writing, as well as the influence of listening and speaking in literacy practices, the focus of this study is on the teaching of composition. The reason for this is twofold. First, the EFL curriculum at the School of Modern Languages (SML) has, at the time of this study, reading comprehension and composition as separate courses. Thus, this study is directed to

composition instructors. Second, in spite of teaching reading and writing skills in separate courses, most of us at the SML integrate the four skills (reading, writing, speaking, and listening) whenever possible to promote real communication.

5.   Methodology of the study

I carried out this study as part of my master's thesis in TESOL at Indiana University of Pennsylvania. Based on a needs assessment survey conducted among a group of composition instructors of the School of Modern Languages (SML), I made decisions about the orientation of this investigation. It was important to involve a group of colleagues in this study because my aim is to design and implement a teacher education workshop program following this comprehensive examination of our EFL writing program. For this reason, feedback from the composition staff of the SML was crucial.

I selected the participants for the survey through convenience sampling, based on the list of composition instructors provided by the SML. Because I would need to communicate with these instructors at some points during the investigation (while I was in the United States), I had to choose only the instructors who had an email address. This would ensure fast and timely communication. Thus, although there were eleven composition instructors at the time, I was able to select only seven of them. The others either had no mail address or were not able to participate in the survey due to personal matters. Out of these seven, only six teachers responded to the survey and agreed to maintain email communication with me.   The participants' anonymity was maintained in order to avoid potential conflict among colleagues due to the opinions quoted in this study. Four participants were female, and two were male. Five of them held master's degree and the other one had a doctorate. All of them had taught English composition for several years, ranging, approximately, from seven to more than twenty years of teaching at the University of Costa Rica.

I surveyed the participants, via electronic communication, in order to identify the most urgent needs in the composition curriculum. The instrument consisted of a questionnaire (see Appendix A) that I created based on Bartlett's (1990) ideas about reflective thinking in teacher development.   These "what" and "why" questions, as he calls them, provided me with information about the general situation of the composition courses at the SML. My aim was to have the teachers reflect on their general impression of the courses.

The results of this survey allowed me to identify the main shortcomings of the courses. After analyzing the teachers' comments, I reaized there were conflicting opinions about the curriculum and student performance that required, first, a careful examination of the teaching of writing at the SML, and then changes that would need to be studied in a future teacher education workshop program that will follow the current investigation.

6.   Setting of the study: A glance at EFL composition at the UCR

The teaching of EFL writing plays a prominent role at the School of Modern Languages, where the undergraduate English program includes six required writing courses:

LM-1235 Composition I
LM-1362 Rhetoric II
LM-1245 Composition II
LM-1472 Rhetoric III
LM-1352 Rhetoric I
LM-1482 Rhetoric IV

6.1.   Emphasis of the courses

In the first year of the program, students take two integrated-skills courses that now include more formal writing instruction. The focus, until about a year ago, was mostly on speaking and listening at this level, with writing being assigned occasionally for homework or fluency class work related to the topics in the conversation textbook. Since August 2003, the

first-year courses include basic formal issues about paragraph organization (topic and concluding sentences) and rhetorical organization (cause-effect, comparison-contrast). Students write stand-alone paragraphs.

At the second year level, students take Composition I and II with five to eight compositions in each course and a four-to-five paragraph essay at the end of Composition II. In third year, the emphasis is on writing five-paragraph expository essays, with five to six essays in Rhetoric I and a similar number of essays in Rhetoric II, culminating with a five-to-ten-page term paper at the end of this year. Rhetoric II emphasizes argumentation. At the fourth year level, Rhetoric III is based on literary criticism essays of different genres while Rhetoric IV aims at writing two 10-to-15 page term papers developed along the course.

6.2.   Process and product orientations

During the last twelve years, two major camps have evolved at the School of Modern Languages—the followers of current-traditional rhetoric and the ones who advocate a combination of the latter with the basic tenets of the process approach. This process/product blend (which to some extent developed after the work by Céspedes et al.) can be translated into an emphasis on writing models, rhetorical organization, and correctness, but also on pre-writing strategies, multiple drafts, peer revision, some teacher-student conferencing, and some attempts to use portfolios for students to keep track of their progress.

Content is important, but teachers mostly see it as the product that develops in order to fit a rhetorical mode, such as narration, description, exposition, and argumentation. Key elements in the composition curriculum are the concepts of topic sentence, thesis statement, suppor- ting details, and concluding sentence. The basics for documenting sources are introduced in Composition II, at the second-year level and developed and refined during third and fourth years.

In general, those teachers who adhere to process tenets present a rhetorical pattern, such as description, followed with models and exercises from the textbook or other supplementary materials. Then the teacher provides the topic to write on or a list of topics for the students to choose from. Next, prewriting, drafting and revising/editing are worked on in class. Pair and group work is done during the prewriting and revising sessions; peer feedback is emphasized. Some of us also include activities for vocabulary-building during the prewriting sessions, through the aid of readings and brainstorming techniques. Still, instruction concentrates on the mastery of structure, clear expression, organization, and punctuation rules.

On the other hand, those who adhere to the product orientation work on the different rhetorical patterns based on model texts and analyses of readings, but may give little or no emphasis to prewriting, drafting, and peer feedback. More class time is devoted to form and correctness than in the other approach. In other words, the students are many times left to their own devices to present a final product.

No matter which approach teachers adhere to, teacher feedback is mostly written, in the form of comments and correction symbols that pinpoint mistakes. (There are a few cases, though, of teachers who barely provide any kind of feedback or who might not return compositions to students.) By and large, teachers do not follow the progress each student has made through the process of writing a particular writing task. Each composition is evaluated and graded individually based on the components of grammar, organization, content, vocabulary, and mechanics (i.e. format, punctuation, and spelling). Rewrites are required by many tea-chers when the grade is below 7.0 (the passing grade) and a maximum of one grade point may be assigned depending on improvement. A few teachers may assign 60% of the grade to the first draft of a composition and then, the remaining 40% after the student revises based on the teachers' feedback.

This is the general picture of the composition courses, but in reality the different practices in both approaches are not so clear-cut. Eclecticism is common, but the trend has been to follow the current-traditional rhetoric. During more than a decade, all these concerns about the teaching processes and learning outcomes in the composition courses have been the subject of several faculty meetings. As educators, we are aware of the serious problems that exist which partly derive from the constant shift from one methodology to another that has characterized the field of L2 writing (Ferris & Hedgcock, 1998; Silva, 1990) and that has influenced our pedagogical decisions without the careful exa- mination of the theoretical implications and application in our particular setting. Many of the changes that have occurred obey the growing concern for making classes communicative and meaningful for the students. Still, there is a common preoccupation with the apparent lack of academic writing skills that many students exhibit at the end of the program and upon entering graduate courses.

7.   Analysis of the curriculum based on the literacy models: the autonomous vs. the ideological model

From a macro-level perspective, then, we need to analyze the kind of literacy model that, as composition instructors we have been subscribed to, consciously or unconsciously, and start exploring new avenues of knowledge that can shed light about what teaching/learning EFL literacy means. Thus, this section describes the two main literacy camps and their relevance to the teaching of writing at the University of Costa Rica.

The autonomous model of literacy

The traditional view of literacy has had most influence in the field of composition, and the Costa Rican context is no exception. This position conceives literacy as context-independent, separate from orality, neutral in nature, technical, and fundamental for the development of logical functions and abstract thinking (Daniell, 1986; Street, 1984, 1993). Several scholars have labeled this view with different names. For example, Street (1993) states that he uses the name 'autonomous' to describe the technical conception of literacy because of the independent nature of writing that most of the influential authors of this tradition proclaim. Goody (1968) differentiates between speaking and wri- ting because the latter, he asserts, may be autonomous in quality. An essential concern in Goody's work has been the differences between orality and writing (1987). He studied the form of written discourse, and the existence of logic and rationalism in writing. Following an analogous position, Ong (1982) argues that writing gives utterance and thought a sense of wholeness and makes it autonomous. However, other names have been used too. For instance, Daniell (1986) mentions the following: essayist literacy (Scollon & Scollon), the Cognitive Divide notion of literacy (Frake), and the Great Leap theory as Daniell calls it. For her, the Great Leap is an adequate label because its proponents claim that li-teracy makes individuals advance cognitively, an alleged benefit that will also translate to cultures.

The major proponents of the autonomous standpoint have pondered about two main issues—the consequences of literacy and the distinct nature of the written text and oral language. Goody and Watt (1963), the most influential advocates of the Great Divide, maintain that literacy has cognitive consequences for the mind and for Western civilization as a result of the Greek's use of the alphabet as a writing system. One of their basic premises is that oral so-cieties are not literate because they lack such a system and consequently, the supposed mental advantages that derive from it. Grabe and Kaplan (1996, p. 12) summarize Goody and Watt's consequences of literacy in the following fashion:

the domination of history over myth
the distinction between the natural and the supernatural

the ability to store and access greater amounts of knowledge

the creation of abstract logical deduction

the ability to analyse language itself as an object

the awareness of the individual as distinct from the group and consequently the need for private introspection

the rise of critical scepticism towards previously reified knowledge and beliefs

the rise of democratic institutions

Grabe and Kaplan (1996) state, "This long list of consequences" is reminiscent of the "educational goals in modern Western school systems." They maintain that the Great Divide position explains "how literacy has come to be equated with the essence of academic education" (pp. 12-13). Both of these statements quite resemble the view of literacy at the UCR.

Olson (1977), another important figure in this debate, draws from Goody and Watt's work (1963), as well as Havelock's (as cited in Olson, 1977) in order to support his arguments about the consequences of literacy. In his famous essay, Olson asserts, "The faculty of language stands at the center of our conception of mankind; speech makes us human and literacy makes us civilized" (p. 257). Olson attaches the power of abstraction to the written word, and the expression of the concrete to the spoken word. Seeing utterances and written text as dichotomous, Olson (1977) gives the school a preponderant place in the acquisition of literacy:

> Oral language with its depth of resources and its multitude of paths to the same universal goal, while an instrument of limited power for exploring abstract ideas, is a universal means of sharing our understanding of concrete situations and practical actions. Moreover, it is the language children bring to school. Schooling, particularly learning to read, is the critical process in the transformation of children's language from utterance to text. (p. 278)

Following a similar argument, Hildyard and Olson in their strong version of the autonomous model, give "the specialised

forms of the written text" the power to trigger logical functions (as cited in Street, 1984, p. 20). They are concerned, mostly, with the justification of the high expenses that compulsory education represents for many countries. They also equate literacy with schooling, in their attempt to show that compulsory education is vital for the development of intellectual capacities such as logic and abstract thought. In other words, the strong version of literacy disregards the role of the home experiences, especially if they take the form of oral traditions, in the acquisition of literacy.

Many of the premises of the autonomous model characterize the teaching of EFL writing at the University of Costa Rica. We have taught second language literacy quite independently form our own cultural context and delineated in terms of the expectations of a mainstream Anglo-centric academic community. We mainly expect the learner to accommodate to standard American English norms, in terms of grammar, vocabulary, rhetorical structures, and organization. The prevailing view has been to teach EFL literacy as a set of skills, themes, and modes or rhetorical patterns—adopted from standard American English—that our students must learn in order to accommodate to the academic community. The relationship between the expectations of the academic community and the students' L1 literacy experiences is rarely addressed in a majority of our classes. For example, we seldom explore if what our beginning students understand about the organization of a paragraph (in Spanish or L1 composition) is the same as what we teach them about paragraph organization in English.

Because of the context-independent nature of our autonomous view of EFL literacy, there is a tendency to overlook some of the needs of our students. According to one of the participants in this study, we need to consider the real needs of the students in Costa Rica, given the fact that "writing won't be a life/death skill for those teaching in public schools" (Anonymous, personal communication, June 12,

2000). This view agrees with Leki's (2003, p. 315) proposal to examine the real place of writing in our students' lives, warning us that writing may be "overrated" in our curricula.

As another sign of the autonomous view in our curriculum, the Costa Rican culture tends to be disregarded as a source of knowledge. For instance, we have seldom asked our students to read and write about the Costa Rican and Latin American authors who have written in English or whose works have been translated into English. Our own literature can be used, besides the customary American and British works, with the aim of providing background knowledge and fomenting varied literacies.[3] Furthermore, including native literature offers students opportunities to explore their own identity, values, ideologies, and traditions instead of reading and writing about foreign literacy traditions only, which for some students, will always remain distant.

Another element of the autonomous model in our EFL environment in Costa Rica is the native speaker idealization. Although it has diminished in the School of Modern Languages, the trend is commonplace in many other EFL institutions and among the general public as well. Many people tend to underestimate the judgment and knowledge of non-native English-speaking instructors in relation to issues of correct language use. Arguing against the native speaker idealization, Street (1996) empowers EFL teachers in the EFL setting because they know best the relationships between L1 and L2 contexts and have first-hand knowledge about what it takes to learn a second language. Thus, the L1 linguistic, social, and cultural aspects should be recognized as a source of knowledge for both learners and instructors in Costa Rica.

According to Daniell, the main characteristic of the autonomous position "appears to be either a strict dichotomy or a single continuum listing modes of speech, composition, behavior, and thought of oral cultures and of oral persons over against those of literate cultures and literate persons" (1986, p. 182-183). In the composition courses, it is quiet true that we normally use the dichotomy between the oral and the written text as a way to teach students what a good composition should look like. The underlying argument for this practice is that good academic writing should not exhibit traces of orality, which in rea-lity is not always true. In the same way that rea-ding and writing are connected, speaking and listening also help to shape a text (Johns, 1997). The pre-reading and pre-writing activities that we do in class actually foster an integration of skills that also exists in real life. For instance, lecturers may choose to write down the full content of a conference before delivering it in front of the audience. We may read a piece of news and comment about it with the family, or we may write a job application letter and read it aloud several times to be sure of its content.

Furthermore, academic writing often uses elements of conversation, such as personal pronouns like *I*, *You* or *we*, in an attempt to involve the reader interactively in the process of making meaning (Reid, 1993). Do you remember the uncountable times you have told your students not to use *I* or *we* in academic writing? However, if you take a look at a sample of journal articles, books, or Internet documents, you can find a considerable number of personal pronouns in academic writing that fulfill a very specific purpose: engaging the reader in an interactive dialogue. Therefore, rather than teaching speaking and writing as dichotomies, we may teach students the way the four skills are interrelated, depending on the purposes of different types of writing, the genre, and the audience.

Another important issue to address is the impact of the new EFL literacies for those students whose native literacies do not emphasize composing. Many UCR students have not had to compose essays in Spanish like they do in our English program. As one of the participants asserts, many of our students lack the same degree of academic writing proficiency in Spanish that they are expected to achieve in English (Anonymous, personal communication, February 14, 2000). In

elementary and high school, there is little emphasis on the type of academic writing that we teach in EFL at the UCR. This participant states that:

> The composition courses in English are the first SERIOUS courses our students take. The cultural impact of achieving a higher level of academic writing in L2 than in L1 is something we should pay attention to. Maybe we could begin by checking the impact of what we define as an essay for them and what they have experienced as essays in their L1.

This is a very important issue to address; therefore, I hope the present investigation will lead to the identification of concrete steps we can take to deal with it. We will need to clarify the role that the Spanish (or L1) literacies have on the students' interaction with English texts.

7.2. The ideological model of literacy

Followers of what Street (1984) calls the ideological model propose a multidimensional view of literacy ground within the ideology of a given culture. Street recognizes a trend toward a pluralistic, culture-bound, theory of literacies emerging from the work by Heath (1982a, 1982b, 1982c, 1983), Graff (1979), and Scribner and Cole (1981), among many other scholars. The work of these researchers has explained the way various literacy practices—including ideologies, institutions, personal interactions and transactions, and linguistic issues—manifest in the different social contexts where individuals interact. A common theme is that the school is to be seen as one of the institutions (but not the only one as the autonomous model asserts) that promotes literacy, together with the home (Heath, 1983), the library and the bookshop (Baynham, 1995) and other institutions in a society. Students' literacy experiences at home, according to Heath, provide a wealth of knowledge about students' and parents' interaction with the written and oral word. The scholarly work within the ideological model of literacy has found no evidence of the supposed cognitive consequences

of literacy that the other camp proclaims. Daniell asserts that arguments against the Great Leap's link between literacy and abstract thinking mainly come from Basso's 1980 work (as cited in Daniell, 1986) and with Scribner and Cole's 1978 ethnographic research on the Vai people from Liberia. Basso found evidence of abstract thinking in the rules of a game played by children in an oral culture, the Apache. Scribner and Cole investigated abstract thinking among literate and non-literate people and found no significant difference among the groups.

In her highly influential ethnographic work with minority children in the Piedmont Carolinas, Heath (1983) reveals the different literacy experiences of children in two communities and their ways with words at home and in the community. She found that the children's experiences with the written word did not prepare them for the literacy experiences they would encounter in school. There is a large set of complex factors that intertwine between the uses of oral and written language, which cannot be accounted for by using the tenets of the autonomous model. Heath's work directs composition instructors toward valuable sources of knowledge within the home and the community that we should be able to explore in our own context, such as the different uses of reading and writing and the kind of experiences with the written word that students have at home and in their communities. The discrepancies found should tell us about the type of literacy-building activities that we can use in order to prepare our students better.

Haas Dyson's study (1984) about a minority culture child, calls attention to the discrepancies between school and home literacies. Haas Dyson describes the school curriculum as "blinders" that prevent teachers and researchers from understanding the nature of home literacy and its relationship, or lack of it, with that of the school's. For instance, the type of questions teachers ask at school in order to test students' knowledge of subject matter may be regarded as pointless to a student not used to them, while this student may appear 'underprepared' in the eyes of the teacher. Haas Dyson's conclusions call for

recognition of the ideological nature of literacy, which is one of the fundamental arguments against the Great Divide theory. The ideological model of literacy is then seen as inseparable from oral practices, ideological, and determined by the sociocultural context in which literacy is embedded (Street, 1984). Street also argues against proponents of the autonomous view who basically claim that literacy, as a technical artifact, has cognitive consequences in individuals exposed to such technology, and that this cognitive development is missing in cultures that have no access to the technology of literacy.

Thus, if we decided to advocate an ideological model of EFL literacy at the University of Costa Rica, as I propose, we would need to pay attention to issues such as the kind of literacy experiences that our students bring from their homes and schools (Heath, 1983). For example, it is important to know the type of reading and writing students have done, the importance their families give to reading, writing, and schooling, and other similar concerns. We could explore whether our view of literacy, explicit or implicit in our curriculum, syllabi, and methodologies, acts as a blinder (Haas Dyson, 1984) between the University and the students' past, present, and future literacy experiences. If would be interesting to find out if the modes approach that we teach conflates or conforms in any way with the students' previous experiences of what good writing means in their L1 and L2. Furthermore, we need to assess if this modes approach actually prepares the students for the demands we place on them in the "Licenciatura" and graduate programs.

Having delineated the basic tenets of the ideological model and their relevance to the Costa Rican context, it is important to examine closely what literacy means within this position and how it differs from that of the traditional autonomous model.

7.3.   A look into current definitions of literacy

An examination of the current literature shows that there are many definitions of literacy that suit distinct purposes for individuals, so-cieties, and countries. In the ideological position, literacy is defined in terms of social, political, cultural, and economical factors, among o-thers. In the autonomous model, the emphasis is mostly on functional literacy, i.e., on acquiring "the knowledge and skills in reading and writing which enable [the individual] to engage in all those activities in which literacy is normally assumed in his [or her] culture or group," according to Gray's definition (as cited in Wagner, 1992, p. 16).

Now let us examine the definitions within the ideological model. Although I separate them according to the emphasis given by the major scholars who propose them, these definitions share many characteristics that direct us toward advocating a pluralistic view of literacy. Therefore, they should not be considered as exclusive.

7.3.1.   *Literacy as social practice*

Two definitions will be analyzed in this section—Baynham's (1995) and Street's (1984). Baynham defines literacy as a set of social practices. He states, "Literacy as social practice [involves] both what people do with literacy and what they make of what they do: the values they place on it and the ideologies that surround it" (p. 245). Baynham conceives literacy as a socio-political and educational construct. He points out that literacy practices usually do not occur in isolation because they may take place in contexts where there is oral and written interaction in a group in relation to a text. Different events and institutions in society mirror this oral/written interaction such as a library, a politician's speech, a minister's speech, the writing of a letter, the reading aloud of a piece of news. These social or political constructs also exhibit particular linguistic characteristics that teachers and students can study in the classroom, within contexts these texts belong to, i.e., not seeing linguistic study as a sole objective. This theory of linguistic study, which he borrows from Stubbs (as cited in Baynham, 1995, p. 116) constitutes an

"educational theory (of spoken and written) language" which should be able to:

> account for the linguistic organization of whole texts;
>
> account for the ways in which language (both spoken and written) is embedded in a constitutive of social context;
>
> account for the ways in which power relations are linguistically encoded in both spoken and written language;
>
> characterize the similarities and differences between spoken and written language;
>
> present a framework to describe how those differences might be realized in a range of communicative contexts;
>
> characterize in linguistic terms the interaction between spoken and written language in context; [and]
>
> account in linguistic terms for significant cross-cultural and inter-group variation in the functions and uses of spoken and written language (cf. Gumperz 1982; Cook-Gumperz 1986; Scollon & Scollon 1981). (pp. 117-118)

Applied to the context of the EFL composition curriculum at the UCR, Baynham's (1995) conception of literacy illuminates ways in which we can link the spoken and the written language in the composition classroom. Our traditional approach has been linguistic and rhetorical, with little or no consideration of social, ideological, and political aspects. Of particular re-levance for us would be the study of the organization of a text, other than from the rhetorical point of view, using genre analysis activities si-milar to the ones Baynham (1995) suggests in chapters four and six of his book *Literacy Practices*.

Street (1984) also treats the social dimension of literacy in his definition, but at the same time, incorporates the technological element. Street focuses on social and technological issues in his definition. He argues against the autonomous model of literacy mainly due to its denial of the influence of social and cultural factors that determine literacy practices in a given society. Street states that literacy cannot be considered as a mere technical artifact. "It is a social process, in which particular socially constructed technologies are used within particular institutional frameworks for specific social purposes" (p. 97). The social and technological dimensions of literacy are emphasized in his definition, as well as its malleable nature depending on contexts and purposes. Widdowson (1998) makes a similar argument about the role of technology in his lecture about ownership. He claims that, "Telecommunication and information technology" (Widdowson, 1998, p. 245) will eventually contribute to standardize other varieties of English (and of other literacies, I would add), by providing increasing opportunities for interaction between people of different cultures.

Street (1995) also provides some pedagogical considerations for teachers who would like to adhere to an ideological model of literacy, although he admits pedagogy is not his main field of expertise. To our purposes at the SML, two main elements are especially relevant—his pluralistic framework and his criticism about the traditional genre approach. First, he explains that there is no single view of literacy appropriate to all situations. Therefore, he proposes "a heuristic framework within which teachers, practitioners, teacher educators and programme planners can theorize their practice in the contexts of the specific cultural differences, localities and politics they are faced with" (p. 136). Contextualizing our literacy framework is a must in the EFL setting in Costa Rica.

Second, Street (1995) contends that critical literacy about the dominant discourses has to be carried on since the beginning stages of instruction, not after the students have acquired these discourses as the traditional genre approach claims. In the traditional version of this approach the teacher has to teach "the dominant literary forms, the genres of expository prose and essay-text- writing, the ways of composing le-tters to business organizations" (p. 139) and then after mastery occurs, students can be critical of these dominant discourses. Based on Gee's arguments (as cited in Street, 1995), Street asserts that students ought to be empowered in early instruction so that they can criticize, in each situated practice and context, whether the

dominant genre that they have to learn agrees or undermines their native ones. Although this debate takes place within the L1 context in relation to minority persons who are discriminated against because of issues of power, it might apply to the EFL situation, where students may find themselves at a disadvantage within the new academia. Thus, we may consider the use of dominant-genre criticism in some of our courses, as a way to explore the impact of these dominant genres on our students' current or perceived needs and experiences.

7.3.2.   *Literacy as discourses*

Gee's essay in Zamel and Spack (1998) attempts to define literacy. Gee calls for a careful reconsideration of the different elements that intertwine in this concept, and most important of all, he raises awareness about the actual role of the home and the school in the promotion of literacy. For Gee, defining literacy implies talking about discourses, contexts, learning and acquisition, and culture; his discussion of each of these components proves useful to realize the wide range of knowledge that literacy encompasses.

Parallel to the new understanding of literacy as a plurality, the concept of discourse also acquires multiple dimensions. Gee (1998, p. 51) defines a discourse as "a socially accepted association among ways of using language, of thinking, and of acting that can be used to identify oneself as a member of a socially meaningful group or "social network." In other words, Gee's first requirement to understanding literacy is that we first recognize that multiple discourses can exist in a society. A discourse represents someone's identity beyond the linguistic realm and so does a literacy.

The other key terms in Gee's analysis are learning and acquisition. Drawing from Krashen (1982, 1985) and Krashen and Terrell's (1983) distinction between learning and acquisition, Gee ponders over the vast array of know-ledge that an individual acquires and/or learns during the process of becoming literate in a first or second language. Much of this

knowledge is unconscious because it is acquired as opposed to knowledge about the language (metalanguage), which is learned. Gee's account suggests that literacy encompasses mostly acquisition processes at the unconscious level.

The first discourse we acquire, our native language, states Gee (1998), comes "free" and constitutes the "primary discourse" or "oral mode" (p. 55), which lends itself to social, cultural, linguistic, and ideological variations. This first discourse may be similar to or very different from the "secondary discourses" and "the se-condary uses of language" (p. 56) as Gee labels those kinds of interactions that go beyond the intimacy of home discourse. Within this framework, Gee asserts, "Literacy is control of se-condary uses of language [i.e. uses of language in secondary sources]" (p. 56). In other words, it refers to the degree of "control" (p. 57) of language and situation that an individual can achieve within socially appropriate norms. The degree of control is determined by whether a discourse was acquired or learned, acquisition being the optimal case according to his view. When secondary discourses can follow the first one smoothly, it means learning at school serves as an extension of the literacy that is actually being acquired at home. He states that through the learning of "meta-level cognitive and linguistic skills . . . they [mainstream middle class children] can . . . critique various discourses throughout their lives" (Gee, 1998, p.57). The condition for this positive result to occur is that learning be linked to good teaching. Otherwise, trying to learn secondary literacies will prove unsuccessful.

Although Gee (1998) does not define what he means by good and bad teaching, he provides an example of what seems to be an ineffective procedure—the provision of mostly "practice" (p. 57) on literacies without enough opportunities for acquisition. The focus is on learning standard skills that teachers assume students have begun developing at home, when in reality non-main stream children have not. Therefore, when home and school discourses clash, the acquisition of secondary discourses

fails, according to Gee. His view resembles Haas Dyson's (1984) assertion about the school curriculum ac-ting as a barrier between home and school literacy.

Gee (1998, p. 58) recommends "exposing children to a variety of alternative primary discourses and secondary discourses, including dominant secondary discourses" for the purpose of knowing about them because acquiring all of them is not the aim. The school's openness towards a variety of discourses in their curricula seems to be pointing at what Gee implies by good teaching. He subtly criticizes the school system's overemphasis on learning as a way to become literate. As a final point, Gee (1998) stresses the necessity to recognize that the conflict between main and minority discourses will always exist; therefore, our society requires the acknowledgment of "wider and more humane concepts of mastery" of literacies "and its connections to gate keeping" (p. 58) that do not necessarily equate to non-literacy.

7.3.3. *Literacy as gatekeeping*

Widdowson's (1998) argument on the ownership of English is reminiscent of Gee's concern for the gatekeeping power of mainstream discourses. Widdowson criticizes gatekeeping practices that marginalize language varieties because they are different from standard English, which he views as a very ambiguous concept. Being that English is an international language used by an always increasing number of non-native speakers, it is difficult to define a standard based on native-speaker norms only. His argument continues by clarifying what it is that a standard language represents in reality, i.e., not only a communicative but also a "communal function" (p. 241); therein, a language variety represents the identity of a particular group with a specific and distinct set of values, beliefs, and ideologies. Far from being conducive to chaos and miscommunication, a flexible concept of standardization, Widdowson contends, may allow us "to meet the needs of the communities concerned" (p.

245) instead of keeping them outside the privileged "dominant discourses" to use Gee's (1998, p. 53) terminology.[4]

One of Widdowson's (1998) concluding statements can be applied to our discussion of the definition of literacy. He maintains that, "English and English teaching are proper to the extent that they are appropriate, not to the extent that they are appropriated" (p. 248). Widdowson's statement implicitly recognizes the ideological nature of literacy, which varies from culture to culture, and assumes political importance within a culture. For the purposes of our EFL setting at the UCR, his underlying message can be interpreted as a call for expanding our conception of standard English in order to include elements of our own culture and native language(s), not only Anglo-centric literacy. Otherwise, we will continue to close the gates to students who are not able to appropriate Anglo-American literacy and reduce their opportunities for success in acquiring EFL literacy. Since literacy means appropriate use of secondary discourses, to continue to use Gee's (1998) terminology, it should be taught according to the context it is embedded in. The next definitions also highlight the importance of the social context in literacy learning.

7.3.4. *Literacy as a cultural activity*

In her book about multilingual education in the United States, Perez (1998) defines literacy as "not only being able to read and write the symbols, but also as the ability to do so in a culturally appropriate manner" (p. 5). Based on the Vygotskian theory that children use cultural identity to learn to process their worlds and who they are, Perez illuminates new dimensions within the concept of literacy. The role of cultural experiences embedded in a literacy event becomes indispensable in order to analyze the impact of literacy in a particular group. Thus, under Vygotskian theory, children from minority groups have to make sense of two worlds in order to interpret their own identity. Perez claims that the value of the

minority culture cannot be left aside or denied by the schools because both cultures make up the identity of bilingual children.

A sociocultural model of literacy is also the premise of Johns' book (1997), *Text, role, and context*, devoted largely to higher education. Her definition of literacy is the basis for the present study, as stated above (in section 4: What is literacy?). Johns further delineates the ideological position by acknowledging the multiplicity of sources of knowledge that students and teachers draw from during the processes of literacy acquisition at school, at home, and in other contexts. According to Johns (1997), it is precisely the interrelationship of literacy experiences in various sociocultural situations that should become the center of analysis for teachers and researchers in order to evaluate the theories of literacy that current and new pedagogies imply. Furthermore, Johns asserts that literacy is not static, but evol-ving; therefore, it is the teachers' responsibility to encourage students to continue to acquire literacy "throughout their lives" (p. 3).

The latter issue is particularly important for us at the School of Modern Languages. Being in an EFL setting where contact with English is minimum for many of our students, we should provide more detailed information about the ways they can continue to acquire literacy. For instance, we can supply them with reading lists, online resources, more guidance about access to exchange programs and about their possible career interests, and other similar resources. Moreover, we should guide those students who lack a clear career interest and come to our program in search of their professional goals. For those students who do not want to pursue a career in education or translation[v], we are currently unable to offer direction, which may be detrimental for their performance and for the country's urgent need of prepared bilingual professionals.

7.4.   A look into illiteracy

Having examined this wide variety of definitions of literacy, most of which stress components far beyond the language code, it is important to analyze the concept of illiteracy. Grabe & Kaplan (1996) observe that a literacy crisis has prevailed during the last two decades in schools in the USA, Australia, Canada, and other English-speaking countries, as reflected by the low scores in national tests. In spite of this fact, Grabe & Kaplan seemingly consider this phenomenon a natural consequence of the higher number of people from different strata of society who have access to college education.

On a similar line of thought, Mike Rose (1998) analyzes the concept of illiteracy and its possible consequences. Rose recognizes the preoccupation among university faculty regarding the alleged illiteracy of many students in the United States, especially those referred to remedial courses. Rose refers the reader to Daniels' (1983) interesting compilation of outcries about students' writing, voiced by many faculty professors or published in well-known news media. In this book, Daniels, borrowing from Mersand (as cited in Daniels, 1983), analyzes several language crises that have affected the United States and have unnerved college presidents, deans, and professors who express bewilderment for the apparent decay of the English language and the inevitable fall into illiteracy. Although addressing the US context, it is not surprising that these complaints about students' literacy levels in the first language are quite similar to the ones on the same topic in our EFL setting. The following citations refer to classes in the United States during the 1950s and 1960s:

> Recent graduates, including those with university degrees, seem to have no mastery of the language at all. They cannot construct a simple declarative sentence, either orally or in writing. They cannot spell common, everyday words. Punctuation is apparently no longer taught. Grammar is a complete mystery to almost all recent graduates. . . . There is no sense of responsibility about language, no recognition of the power of words, merely a vague groping accompanied by the hope that the reader will "get what I mean." More specifically, it is apparent that most students arrive at college with little or no training in writing, and

in many cases without the basic knowledge of what a sentence is, or what a paragraph is. Even such elementary matters as spelling and punctuation seem to have been neglected. (p. 32)

The focus of such illiteracy claims basically revolves around linguistic issues— not knowing how to write, how to make a sentence, or how to use grammar rules correctly. In the background, the common inquiry seems to be, 'How can my students not apply basic grammar rules when they write if they have been learning them for four years, at the very least?' These comments remind us of Gee's arguments about the role of acquisition and learning of academic discourses in the schools. Perhaps we are not providing enough opportunities for acquisition in our general curriculum because of our traditional orientation toward the study of grammar rules and other form concerns. Perhaps our students need a writing assessment system, such as the portfolio system, that helps them examine their progress through time, evaluate their own writing, tackle problems, and set their own goals, under the guidance of the composition teacher and/or the collaboration of peers.

As Rose (1998) proposes, we need to begin by identifying what we mean by poor reading and writing skills. For this purpose, the macro perspective of an ideological theory of literacy suggested in the present investigation offers a wide range of paths that EFL university educators in Costa Rica may explore in order to gain understanding about our students' reading and writing performance.

Conclusions

This investigation has shown that a pluralistic view of literacy provides multiple sources of knowledge that can help us understand second language writing more comprehensively. Through an ideological model of literacy applied to EFL writing instruction at college level in Costa Rica, we

learn that the claims about students' apparent lack of academic writing skills require a broad exploration of issues that our current autonomous view of literacy has overlooked. Becoming literate in a second language involves key issues such as: the role of home and L1 experiences; the relationship between speaking and writing in the production of a text; the use of variety of genres beyond the five-paragraph essay; the use of texts from the L1 culture—when available in English; the provision of enough opportunities for the acquisition of multiple academic literacies, and the exploration of the social, cultural, economic, and political context of the country in relation to the different needs for academic and other types of writing. All of these issues entail a clear delineation of goals, objectives, methodologies, tasks, types of texts, and evaluation procedures with the purpose of "negotiating academic literacies," as Zamel and Spack (1998, p. xi) contend, instead of advocating gate-keeping practices that, in the end, deny students opportunities for advancement and prevent the University from achieving the essence of its academic and social goals.

Recommendations for further research

A much needed step to follow after this investigation is to study the different approaches to L1 and L2 writing from a historical perspective and their influence in our curriculum. We need to understand the origin of our practices. Likewise, we should explore the needs for academic and other types of writing in the curriculum as dictated by the real tasks students will be asked to perform in our "Licenciatura" and graduate programs, as well as on the job. We have to teach other genres beyond the stand-alone paragraph, the five-paragraph essay, and the term paper in order to better prepare students in multiple academic literacies. Because writing research papers is one of the ultimate goals in our programs, it requires more detailed analysis from the

perspective of the language of research and its extensive list of conventions, which is one of the most difficult genres for our students.

End Notes

1   The first year curriculum of the English program now has a heavier academic component for its two integrated-skills courses (LM-1001 and LM-1002), first implemented in August 2003. The courses include more emphasis in academic reading and writing skills than they used to have, which implies the second to fourth year composition courses, mainly, will have to be re-designed.

2   The participants in this survey were all experienced composition teachers from the School of Modern Languages who engaged in an online dialogue with the researcher over a period of approximately 8 months at irregular intervals at their convenience. We discussed their major impressions about the problems in our composition courses. Their answers served to shape my master's thesis entitled *A Teacher Education Workshop Program for Costa Rican College Composition Instructors.*

3   A short list of Latin American and Caribbean literature in the English language includes:
Alvarez, J. (1992). *How the Garcia girls list their accents*. New York: Penguin.
Benavides, M. (1993). *The children of Mariplata: Stories from Costa Rica*. (J. Henry, Trans.). Dufour Editions.
Colchie, T. (Ed.). (1992). *A hammock beneath the mangoes: Stories from Latin America*. New York: Penguin.
Gagini, C. (1985). *Redemptions: A Costa Rican novel*. San Diego State University Press.
Jaramillo, E. (Ed.). (1991). *When new flowers bloomed: Short stories by women writers from Costa Rica and Panama*. Latin American Literary Review Press.

4   By dominant discourses, he means those that "lead to social goods in a society." Gee also talks about 'dominant groups,' i.e., "those groups that have the fewest conflicts when using them [the dominant discourses]" (Gee, 1998, p. 53).

5   We need to investigate the number of students who enter and leave our program with no professional goal in mind and create opportunities to help them explore their skills and talents.

References

Bartlett, L. (1990). Teacher development through reflective thinking. In J.C. Richards, & D. Nunan (Eds.). *Second language teacher education*. New York: Cambridge.

Baynham, M. (1995). *Literacy practices: Investigating literacy in social contexts*. New York: Longman.

Céspedes, R., Rodríguez, X., Segura, S., Soto, E., & Ureña, E. (1994). "The process approach: An effective alternative to teaching composition". Unpublished Licenciatura thesis University of Costa Rica.

Connors, R. J. (1981). The rise and fall of the modes of discourse. *College Composition and Communication, 32*, 444-455.

Daniell, B. (1986). Against the "Great Leap" theory of literacy. *PRE/TEXT 7*, 181-193.

Daniels, H. A. (1983). *Famous last words: The American language crisis reconsidered*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press.

Ferris, D., & Hedgcock, J. S. (1998). *Teaching ESL composition: Purpose, process, and practice*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Gebhard, J. G., & Oprandy, R. (1999). *Language teaching awareness: A guide to exploring beliefs and practices*. New York: Cambridge.

Gee, J. P. (1998). What is literacy? In V. Zamel, & R. Spack (Eds.). *Negotiating academic literacies: Readings on teaching and learning across cultures*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Goldman, S. R., & Treuba, H. T. (1989). *Becoming literate as a second language*. Norwood, NJ: Ablex.

Goody, J. (Ed.). (1968). *Literacy in traditional societies*. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge.

Goody, J., & Watt, I. P. (1963). The consequences of literacy. *Comparative studies in society and History, 5*, 304-345.

Grabe, W., & Kaplan, R. B. (1996). *Theory & practice of writing*. New York: Longman.

Graff, H. J. (1979). *The literacy myth: literacy and social structure in the 19th century city*. New York: Academic Press.

Haas Dyson, A. (1984). Emerging alphabetic literacy in school contexts: Toward defining the gap between school curriculum and child mind. *Written Communication, 1*, 5-55.

Heath, S. B. (1982a). Protean shapes in literacy events: Ever-shifting oral and literate traditions. In D. Tannen (Ed.). *Spoken and written language: Exploring orality and literacy*. Norwood, NJ: Ablex.

Heath, S. B. (1982b). Questioning at home and at school: A comparative study. In G. Sprindler (Ed.). *Doing the ethnography of schooling: Educational anthropology in action*. New York: Holt, Rinehart, & Winston.

Heath, S. B. (1982c). What no bedtime story means: Narrative skills at home and at school. *Language in Society*, 11, 49-56.

Heath, S. B. (1983). *Ways with words: Language, life, and work in communities and classrooms*. New York: Cambridge.

Johns, A. (1997). *Text, role, and context: Developing academic literacies*. Cambridge: Cambridge.

Johns, A. (2003). Genre and ESL/EFL composition instruction. In B. Kroll (Ed.). *Exploring the dynamics of second language writing*. New York: Cambridge.

Kaplan, R., & Grabe, W. (1996). *Theory and practice of writing*. New York: Addison Wesley Longman.

Krashen, S. (1982). *Principles and practice in second language acquisition*. Hayward, CA: Alemany.

Krashen, S. (1985). *Inquiries and insights: Second language teaching, immersion and bilingual education, literacy*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Alemany/Prentice Hall.

Krashen, S., & Terrel, T. (1983). *The Natural Approach: Language acquisition in the classroom*. Hayward, CA: Alemany.

Kroll, B. (Ed.) (1990). *Second language writing: Research insights for the classroom*. New York: Cambridge.

Kroll, B. (2003). Epilogue: Exploring ourselves. In B. Kroll (Ed.). *Exploring the dynamics of second language writing*. New York: Cambridge.

Leki, I. (2003). A challenge to second language writing professionals: Is writing overrated? In B. Kroll (Ed.). *Exploring the dynamics of second language writing*. New York: Cambridge.

Matsuda, P. K. (2003). Second language writing in the twentieth century: A situated historical perspective. In B. Kroll (Ed.).

Exploring the dynamics of second language writing. New York: Cambridge.

Olson, D. R. (1977). From utterance to text: The bias of language in speech and writing. *Harvard Educational Review, 47*, 257-281.

Ong, W. J. (1982). *Orality and literacy: The technologizing of the word*. New York: Methuen.

Perez, B. (1998). *Sociocultural contexts of language and literacy*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Reid, J. (1993). *Teaching ESL writing*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Richards, J. C., & Nunan, D. (1990). *Second language teacher education*. New York: Cambridge.

Rodríguez, X. (2000). "A teacher education workshop program for Costa Ricans college composition instructors." Unpublished Master's thesis Indiana University of Pennsylvania.

Rose, M. (1998). The language of exclusion: Writing instruction at the university. In V. Zamel, & R. Spack (Eds.). *Negotiating academic literacies: Readings on teaching and learning across cultures*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Scribner, S., & Cole, M. (1981). *The psychology of literacy*. Cambridge: Harvard.

Silva, T. (1990). Second language composition instruction: Developments, issues, and directions in ESL. In B. Kroll (Ed.). *Second language writing: Research insights from the classroom*. New York: Cambridge.

Silva, T. (1993). Toward an understanding of the distinct nature of L2 writing: The ESL research and its implications. *TESOL Quarterly, 27*, 657-677.

Spack, R. (1997). The acquisition of academic literacy in a second language: A longitudinal case study. *Written Communication 14*, 3-62.

Street, B. V. (1984). *Literacy in theory and practice*. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge.

Street, B. V. (1993). Introduction: The new literacy studies. In B.V. Street (Ed.). *Cross-cultural approaches to literacy*. New York: Cambridge.

Street, B. V. (1995). *Social literacies: Critical approaches to literacy in development, ethnography and education*. New York: Longman.

Street. B. V. (1996). Academic literacies. In N.D. Baker, J. Clay, & C. Fox. (Eds.). *Challenging ways of knowing: In English, Maths and Science*. Washington, D.C.: Falmer.

Tannacito, D. J. (Comp.). (1995). *A guide to writing English as a second or foreign language: An annotated bibliography of research and pedagogy*. Alexandria, VA: TESOL.

Wagner, D. A. (1992). World literacy: Research and policy in the EFA decade. In D. A. Wagner, & L. D. Puchner (Eds.). *World literacy in the year 2000*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Widdowson, H. G. (1998). The ownership of English. In V. Zamel, & R. Spack (Eds.)*Negotiating academic literacies: Readings on teaching and learning across cultures*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Zamel, V., & Spack, R. (Eds.). (1998). *Negotiating academic literacies: Readings*

on teaching and learning across cultures. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Appendix

Needs Assessment Questionnaire directed to the English Composition Instructors at the School of Modern Languages[*]

Through the following questions I would like you to reflect about the general situation of the composition courses at the SML. Think about the courses you have taught and their goals, the methodology you used, and the main drawbacks of the composition curriculum.

1. Which composition courses have you taught?

2. What is the main instructional goal of these courses?

3. What counts as knowledge in teaching composition at the UCR?

4. What kind of methodology did you use?

5. What are the main drawbacks of the current composition curriculum?

* Adapted from Barlett, 1990.