

Writing for Study Purposes: A Guide to Developing Individual Writing Skills

Review by Terry Santos

WRITING FOR STUDY PURPOSES: A GUIDE TO DEVELOPING INDIVIDUAL WRITING SKILLS. Arthur Brookes and Peter Grundy. CAMBRIDGE: Cambridge University Press, 1990, pp.162. Cloth, \$34.50, paper, \$12.95.

Writing for Study Purposes is a resource book for teaching academic writing. Designed for the practicing classroom teacher more than for the less experienced teacher-in-training, its audience is most likely to be individual ESL/EFL instructors seeking practical ideas for developing students' academic writing abilities. But what they may find more interesting, as I did, is the first half of the book in which the authors clearly set forth their philosophy of, and approach to, teaching writing.

Brookes and Grundy let us know in the preface that *Writing for Study Purposes* is based on their personal experiences as teachers of academic writing in a number of settings and institutions, currently the University of Durham in the UK. For me, the personal comes through most of all in their commitment to a "communicative," "integrated," and "humanistic" approach, which they are willing to spell out in some detail. Their definition of communicative practice in the writing classroom is as follows:

- having something meaningful to say
- reaching an audience
- working in small groups

- working collaboratively
- developing register awareness
- talking naturally

An integrated approach means "transferring naturally between one skill and another" (p. 8) by linking writing to listening (as in note-taking), speaking ("talking naturally"), and reading. And their humanistic principles are given as "always thinking first of the learner and what is to be learnt, . . . recognizing that the learner should be free from authority, prescription, overt correction and . . . the imposition of language models, promoting freedom to express self, and recognizing centrality of personal discovery" (pp. 9-10). While I wonder whether teachers—and students, for that matter—in most programs and institutions in the world would find these principles either fully attractive or practicable, I respect the forthrightness of the statements. Throughout the sections on approach, readers will know where the authors stand on the crucial issues of teaching writing (e.g., contrastive rhetoric, evaluation, and the relationship between process and product), and will likely find themselves engaged in an ongoing debate with the authors on some of these issues.

It is necessary to be aware of the "broadly humanistic methodology" (p. 10) represented in this handbook because it is reflected in the suggested exercises in Part 2. My own view of the exercise topics in this section is that many are inappropriate for an academic writing course (e.g., my

personality, my hobby or interest, a personal belonging, my mood over the last 24 hours, changing my life style), but the authors are firm in their commitment to "learner biography [as] the subject-matter of the writing exercises" (p.10).

For them, the problem of content in writing courses—what students will write about—is solved by the elevation of self-expression over other considerations. Within that framework, however, all of the important aspects of academic writing are addressed (e.g., using sources, citing evidence, writing abstracts versus summaries, using technical terms,

achieving cohesion), and teachers looking for lesson-planning ideas will find them here.

Writing for Study Purposes will appeal above all to those who share the authors' teaching philosophy and approach, but it will also be stimulating and thought-provoking to those who do not.

About the Author

Terry Santos is an associate professor in the English Department at Humboldt State University in Northern California, where she teaches TESL methodology, writing, and linguistics.