

Creating the Fluent, Confident Writer

Innovative Techniques for ESL Writing Courses

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This project by Prudence Ingerman is accepted in its present form.

Date _____

Project Advisor _____

Project Reader _____

Abstract:

ESL students are usually concerned with writing with no errors and this built-in critical editor stifles the rich writing potential which all students have. Through creating a safe environment and activities which nurture the creative spirit, it is possible to limit this editor to infrequent but necessary appearances and encourage writing large quantities of ungraded material. This paper suggests techniques for building a classroom community, including the use of a scripted writing process, responding to instructor writing and one-to-one conferencing. The essay also demonstrates how fluency can be achieved via a weekly silent class, mind-mapping and copious free-writing. These techniques are described in the development of an intermediate-level writing class in an Intensive English Program in a small college setting. Suggestions and adaptations of these techniques are included for higher-level courses.

ERIC Descriptors

Writing Skills
Writing Instruction
Curriculum Development
College Second Language Programs
Language Fluency
Creative Teaching
Peer Teaching

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Teaching Context

My teaching context is unique in several ways. I am the sole full-time teacher in the Intensive English Program (IEP) at Juniata College in Huntingdon, Pennsylvania, a small liberal arts college of 1,300 students. This means I have the responsibility and freedom to implement and evaluate the curriculum I develop. Juniata College itself has internationalization (10% of the student body) written into its mission statement and there are around a 100 students each year from approximately 30 countries. In addition there is a very active study abroad program with affiliations in 25 countries and many faculty are supported in visiting and lecturing at these sites. The last unusual aspect of this teaching context is that a student may gain up to 15 credits towards graduation for work done in the IEP. There are three levels of instruction in this program: advanced level, which grants three credits per class, and high-intermediate and intermediate levels, which grant fewer credits each. Students must get a B average in the advanced ESL courses to continue on to regular college classes.

Students

Students enter the IEP for one of three reasons: They may be graduate students who simply want to improve their English skills; they may be one-year exchange students; or they

may be four-year degree-seeking students whose English levels are not quite high enough to take a full load of regular college classes. The TOEFL scores of students in this program are usually below 550. They are tested upon admission and at the semester end. Most students gain an average of 40 to 80 points on the TOEFL per semester. Students range in age from 18 to 29; the average is 20. An example of the diversity of cultures was the Fall, 2001 class which had students from Germany, Ecuador, Morocco, Switzerland, Spain, Iran, Bosnia and Japan.

Beliefs and Assumptions

Although I have had a life-long love affair with writing and words, my eyes were not opened to all the possibilities of how to actually teach writing until I was a SMAT student in the Four Skills class in the summer of 2001. Stop correcting? Poorly written English may have great ideas? A silent class? Draw pictures? My teaching world was shaken. I was stunned by Dvorak's statements about how intensive correction of student writing has little positive effect on motivation or attitudes (1986). I had been a very critical reader and had equated a student with his or her errors, not his or her ideas. Barbara Ueland's statement, "All students are talented, original and have something important to say" (1987, p.3) is on a poster in my office now. I used to think that if a student's level of English was low, then he or she had very little to say. How very wrong I was! Edwin Stieve, in the October, 2000 English Teaching Forum Journal, p. 35, describes using silence to increase spontaneity and directness of communication. I became curious if I could also do this. Mapping of any kind was unknown to me until I saw the rich possibilities in *The Mind Map Book* (Buzan, T. 1993) and experimented using this technique for my own notetaking and lesson planning. Through

Janice Birdsall's modeling of excellent teaching of the Four Skills class, my beliefs were affirmed that students learn all skills better if they are in a comfortable community, if the task is theme-based and if all four skills are integrated into the theme. These new pieces of learning and insights have had a huge impact in the way I approach the teaching of writing now and they deeply affected my research for this project.

Focus

In this paper, I will show how the application of these beliefs and assumptions had a positive effect on a new writing course I developed in the fall semester of 2001. The course was ESL 100, the lowest level course offered (intermediate) at Juniata. There were a total of four students (one each from Taiwan, Korea, Japan and Mexico) in the class, which met Monday, Wednesday and Friday for a total of four and a half hours per week.

I will show how process writing and response papers helped to build confidence through classroom community, and how silent classes and mind mapping helped to build fluency. I will also show how I simultaneously adapted some of these strategies and techniques into the advanced-level writing class which had 12 students from eight countries and which met Tuesday and Thursday for three hours per week.

I will conclude with why I found these techniques to be effective and what I learned about myself.

CHAPTER TWO

BUILDING CONFIDENCE BY BUILDING COMMUNITY

I have noticed that regardless of their country of origin, international students have a built-in editor perched firmly on their shoulders, which harps at them continuously, “Be careful, English is hard, spell it right, watch the verbs!” I have found this to be true in all levels of students but most noticeably in lower levels even when they have studied English for many years. Most have written no more than one-page essays. This fear and panic produces extremely simple content in very short, safe sentences. One of the objectives in ESL 100, the lowest level writing course we offer, is to raise students’ confidence. The principle of learning and working in a safe, friendly community seemed to me to be the best environment in which the students would be able to take risks and ignore the shoulder-editor. To this end, I have adapted and developed three activities in which the students work closely with me and with each other. These are the “writing process”, “one-to-one conferencing” and “response writing”. I introduced these during the Fall, 2001 semester.

The Writing Process

In one of the first classes of the semester, I drew a brain on the board, two wobbly semi-circles aligned vertically with a nose pointing up from the division of the lobes. I asked them what it was (“exploded Australia!” “ a brain?”) and elicited comments about what they knew about the functions of each side of the brain. This resulted in some accurate information which I put by the correct side. I added a few more descriptions to come up with the following picture and labels:

L brain- right hand

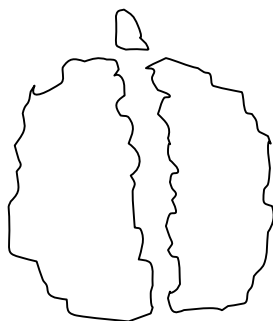
Logical

Analytical

Critical – **Editor**

Likes detail

Impulsive



R brain – left hand

Creator - imaginative

Sees whole picture

Emotional

Cautious

I talked about the Creator (right brain) and the Editor (left brain) and how it is just about impossible for both to work at the same time (Buzan, 1991). If they do, and this is particularly true of writing in a second or third language, the product is usually some very, very simple writing i.e. short safe sentences on a safe familiar topic. I then explained and demonstrated free writing, by rapidly scrawling a very disconnected example on the board such as

" I don't know what to write this is difficult I don't know what to write I am worried about making mistakes Prudence says it doesn't matter I am hungry I didn't have breakfast at home I always had miso soup the food here is TERRIBLE ! ! !"

The faces of the students showed amusement, curiosity and disbelief that they would be asked to write for ten minutes, without stopping at all. I told them to write "I don't know what to write" over and over if they got stuck, but to keep writing. I also was free-writing madly and I saw similar hasty writing as I glanced up. At the end of the time they were very surprised and pleased at how much they had written. They did ten minutes of free-writing at the start of every class. At the same time I usually had some soft Mozart playing, which I

turned off at the end of the ten minutes. I encouraged them to keep one or two samples from the first few weeks to compare to later writing. Other than that, they could keep or toss what they had written. Most tossed it, which indicated growing awareness of writing ability.

On the first Friday, I divided the very small class into two teams (two students per team) for the semester. They decided they wanted men against women. They did the ten-minute free writing as usual. Then, on Fridays only, I asked them to count the number of words they had written and total the words for each team. This activity is adapted from J. Simpson's article "Derby Writing in Classes" (Oct. 2000) in which she states that free-writing "helps students in gaining confidence and in overcoming their fears associated with making errors in writing." (p.34) What started out as quick but careful writing of about 150 words in 10 minutes increased to over 300 words by the semester end. The friendly competition motivated students to write quickly and cease editing. This fluency spilled over into all writing assignments. They knew they could write a lot and fast and enjoyed seeing new ideas spill out unfettered by the critical editor.

When it came time to assign and work on the first essays, the students were comfortable with each other and able to participate in Cassidy's Process Writing (1986), of which there are six steps. Students pair up and remain partners for the duration of the work on one particular piece of writing.

Step1 – Brainstorm Topics and share	Step 2 – Brainstorm Details and share with scripted questions from the writer	Step 3- Sloppy copy Content is addressed by the reader through scripted questions from the writer.
Step 4 – Revision Copy Revisions are discussed	Step 5 – The Editor Appears Students collaborate to address mechanical errors.	Step 6 - Publishing

See Appendix, page 46, for complete description of steps and scripted questions.

As I was simultaneously teaching an advanced-level writing course, I was somewhat frustrated at the very different reactions of the students to the writing process. They were, in general, more positive than negative and noticeably more positive in the lower level class. The lower level students were very aware of their challenges and were eager to improve. The class was very small and the four students had become good friends and had no problem sharing and helping each other. This awareness and cooperation corresponds perfectly to the description of the Stage I dependent and unsure learner as described by the community language learning approach (CLL) (Larsen-Freeman, 1986). The students in the advanced level class were also taking regular college classes and most were committed to the product and not very tolerant of process. Their ability and experience with English was far greater than that of the students in the lower level and I can see now that they were hovering around Stage III of CLL, the stage in which their aggressiveness about their knowledge should not be interpreted as a challenge to authority. Rather it was a good sign that they were beginning to be aware of what they didn't know and were more emotional about it. This explained perfectly the enormous difference in participation and attitude towards the writing process in both classes. Half way through the semester I reviewed the importance of process in general (See Chapter Four), in the advanced class, and their attitudes toward the steps became more positive. In the future, I would definitely retain all the steps with the beginning class but reduce or minimize them with the advanced students based on my increased awareness of where these students are in their learning process.

One-to-One Conferencing

I scheduled these twenty-minute conferences so that they occurred as soon as possible after I had received and gone over Draft One. They took place in my office where I have a corner of a table between me and the student. We sat at right angles with the student's work visible to both of us. In general, I asked questions, and encouraged discovery on the student's part.

First I did a quick check-in of the student's life (10 = the best day in the world, 1 = "I am miserable and want to go home."). The student chose the number that best described him or herself at the moment and we chatted about that a bit. I listened actively and supportively. This interaction put the student at ease as we were focusing on him as a whole person and not just as a writer. This sharing and closer relationship that developed as a result of the one-to-one conference transferred to the classroom and contributed to the building of community there.

At the first conference I explained the process of the conference. I showed students the yellow sheet on which I had written some questions related to content and organization (see sample yellow sheet in the Appendix, page 47). Then we looked at the rubric for this particular assignment on which students had circled their estimation of their ability and where I also circled, in another color, my estimation of their ability. The rubric was only related to content and organization. Generally students either scored themselves far better or far worse than my perception (see sample rubric in the Appendix, page 48). I asked if they had any questions about my marking, which was always open to change. Questioning a professor about marks is an alien activity for most international students and I left space and silence at this point for them to gather courage to speak up. Sometimes I deliberately turned

away from them to take a sip of water to decrease the pressure of my presence for just a few seconds, which provided them with more comfort.

I then review the grading system for essays.

$$\begin{aligned} & \text{content/80 of draft one} \\ & \text{plus} \\ & \text{content/80 of the final draft} \\ & \text{total} \div 2 =, \text{ the average, plus mechanics/20} = \text{ the final grade} \end{aligned}$$

I devised this scoring system to allow them to take risks and write courageously in their first drafts without fear of losing points for mechanical errors such as spelling, grammar, word order and punctuation. I am using this system in all three levels of writing classes and it has uniformly received positive feedback. “I like writing without fear the first time. It is new for me.” (2001, advanced level student, Germany). “I can free write in Draft One. I get new ideas this way.” (2001, lower level student, Japan).

Lastly, the students totaled the number of mechanical errors of each type (wo – word order, v – verb tense, A – article etc). These were common proofreader’s marks, which I placed in the margins. Students entered each total on his Errors Graph. (See page 49, Appendix). I created this Error Graph so that students would notice, by making a visual representation of their errors, what they needed to work on and if or how patterns of errors were changing. Students liked seeing how their errors were diminishing on the graph.

This was very difficult to do when they saw a page of their writing with thirty or so proofreader’s marks in the margins. Armed with this graph and the yellow sheet, they took out their list of goals and strategies (made in the first week) and decided if anything needed adding or revising. This ended the conference with the students empowered and talking, making decisions and leaving in a positive frame of mind. In the Fall, 2001 semester, there was an ESL grammar class and I coordinated with the teacher there by having the students

take their Error Graphs to her. As I went over students' work, I jotted down examples of great writing (at least one bit from each student, even if it was just a phrase), and examples of common errors onto a separate piece of paper for the grammar teacher. I went over the great writing with the students in class. I waxed eloquently about these. In the grammar class, the instructor copied the common errors onto a large sheet of paper and exposed one common mistake at a time. The students collectively tried to revise each sentence into better English. Without prompting, they took notes on this better language and structure. If there was time, the students immediately worked some of this new language into chain stories or dialogues, which helped to cement the better wording. I have used this great writing/common mistakes alone in the writing class (when there was no grammar class) in the past and students enjoyed using their own writing to learn from.

Response Writing

In the third and last activity which I devised to build confidence through community, I shared my own life through weekly one-page essays I had written on many topics, for example: "Home", "If I Could Talk with Anyone", "Trees in my Life", "Books in my Life". A complete list is in the Appendix on page 50. I felt that the very real generation gap (I am in my 60's) needed to be closed. I am a very private person but I love to write; I felt that I, like my students, needed to be courageous and this kind of writing and sharing would be safe for me also. I read my writing aloud each Friday, and we went over any new vocabulary and interesting structures and I answered any questions, then I read the piece aloud again. Students chose and explained a significant sentence or phrase, something they connected with in either a positive or negative way. They then began to write the one-page response to

either the selected sentence, or to the title or any part of the content for the next Friday, when they could choose to share or not share their writing.

When looking at their response writing, I only commented briefly and positively on the content. I never marked mechanical errors. I started to do so at first, but when I found myself correcting the most poignant and sensitive story of the death of a beloved sister, I stopped immediately. Correcting has its place but it is not in these writings from the heart. Assessment was based simply on whether they wrote a one-page response and whether it was handed in on time.

The three techniques I introduced into this class worked together to achieve the one goal of creating community. Because I shared my life, they felt free to share theirs and we learned far more about each other than I had experienced in previous writing classes. The conference times also brought them into my office world with its decorations, photos and pictures and allowed them to speak more freely and connect more closely with me. Lastly the intensive relationships that developed between partners as a result of considering each other's writing in the writing process promoted communication and gave them insight into themselves as both readers and writers. In the end of semester course evaluation, students ranked the conferencing as most useful, the reading for content clarity with peers tied with the response writing as elements which gave them confidence as writers. Two students who admitted to hating writing (in any language) at the semester start, said that writing was now their favorite activity in English !

CHAPTER THREE

FLUENCY

In Chapter Two, I wrote about free-writing as a way to build confidence. In this chapter I will show how I integrated free-writing with yet other techniques discussed below to aid in creating fluency. According to the *Cambridge International Dictionary of English* (1995), fluency is the ability “to speak a language easily, without pauses”. Regarding writing, I see fluency as writing a reasonable amount reasonably well in a reasonable amount of time. Of course this is entirely individualized and subjective.

In the book *Talking Sketching Moving* (2001), Patricia Dunn explores the use of multiple literacies in the teaching of writing. Although I did not come upon this useful book until the end of the Fall, 2001 semester, I was struck at how comfortably Dunn’s pedagogy, the integration of the four skills as presented in the SMAT program of 2001, and my own beliefs about teaching writing meshed. In this chapter I will describe three multi-skill techniques which I adapted and developed. Each, I found, contributed toward my students’ writing fluency. These are the use of silence, mapping and specific skills practice.

Silence

I was captivated by the short article by Edwin Stieve in *English Teaching Forum* (Oct. 2000) in which he describes the use of silence for students and instructors to “strengthen...abilities to express themselves in writing and with immediacy,” and how this ability “... prepares students to write on the spot in more demanding school and career situations.”(p.36)

At every semester start I watch students agonize over the writing samples they have to produce for classroom placement purposes. The writing level in these one-page essays is often similar to that of a native English-speaking six year old: short, safe sentences with simple, safe vocabulary. I realized that something had to be done to push students to write a reasonable amount reasonably well despite the immediate nature of the assignment. Some inferences I made from the Stieve article made me predict that this could be achieved by incorporating silence into my classroom.

I told the students about the silent class during our first class together, which was a shortened twenty-minute introduction to the class, syllabus and instructor. I told them that when they came to the very next class in this first week there would be some music playing softly, but no talking at all. I explained they would be doing an activity in pairs and they could decide who they would be paired with. I know that whenever I want to try something new and/or bizarre, doing it in the first two weeks of classes is the optimum time as the students are still immersed in the rosy bubble of a honeymoon attitude toward America in general and their immediate environment specifically.

On that first Wednesday, I had some soft Mozart playing and three large posters on the wall (one exposed, two folded up). The open poster said

WELCOME TO SILENT CLASS # 1

Please choose a different color pen or pencil from your partner.

You have $\frac{1}{2}$ an hour to find out as much as you can about the other person by writing questions and

answers.
No talking, please

I directed each pair to a table with one large sheet of paper. I was smiling and being very friendly and the music was meant to be calming. They began to write while I observed and journaled. After 15 minutes, I tapped the blackboard and wrote, “ 15 more minutes”. I noticed that this spurred them on to quicker writing.

After the allotted half hour, I passed out a sheet of lined paper to each and unfolded the second poster.

Please organize the information you have
and write one paragraph about your partner.

You may need to ask a few more questions.

I noticed that as they began to write they would move quickly back to the large paper and ask a forgotten question or two. I collected this writing at the class end and then passed out a small file card to each student.

The last poster said:

I want to know how this class was for you.

Please write what you liked on one side
and what you didn't like on the other.

Sign your name, please.

The students filled these out in class before they left. I turned off Mozart and, surprisingly, the students all arranged their backpacks silently and left the class without talking.

The feedback cards from this first class were(verbatim and used with permission):

Liked	Didn't like
" I like a silent day. I've never taken the class like this. It's very good to improve writing. It was interesting" -physics student –Korea	Ø
"Is amazing how you sometimes need to talk for can communicate with others. This activity teach me that some times is not necessary talk and you must express in deffents forms." – business student - Mexico	" In the past I had sometimes in silent is strange because all the people have the necessity of talk. I felt good and I like but the music really I don't like sometimes did that I couldn't write I don't know why, because in general I like this music."
"To be silent is not so bad. The class with music is good. But I feel tired my sholder and back to write." – psychology student - Japan	"I worry whether my writing skill will improve by them or not. Because I write very simple sentences."
" I have never experience on this activity since I came to the U.S to learn English. Therefore, I felt a little funny (because we couldn't talk) and exciting. I like it." – business student - Taiwan	Ø

Normally this class lasted 80 minutes but I made the decision that the silent class would be only one hour. We continued with silent Wednesdays throughout the semester.

Each silent class began with ten minutes of free-writing, the same as we did on the

other two class days. After the free writing, I sometimes prepared a writing prompt, a few sentences describing a sensitive situation, such as wife abuse or abortion and each student would write for 15 minutes on this, then “discuss” it by writing questions and answers. Other times we had silent “teaching days” when I presented a few common writing problems, one at a time, or a new grammar structure on the board. Each student had a small whiteboard on which to respond. This was the way they asked questions of me and of each other and also wrote examples to share. Feedback on these silent “teaching” days was often more positive than the silent “writing/discussion” days. I was surprised at this response as the “teaching” days were much more work for them. They were constantly alert and busy reading what I had written, responding on their whiteboards and checking others’ responses. I was the one who maintained a brisk pace and kept them on task and responded to non-verbal communication. I was standing in front of the class and behaving (although silently) in a teaching manner, which was familiar to them. I was the one with the lesson (although the grammar question or writing problem arose from them). On the “discussion” days, they were busy but they controlled the pace. I was an observer and perhaps my role was unfamiliar and unclear to them. They were responsible for the interactions and it is possible that they did not see discussion by writing having the same value as learning about a grammar point.

Halfway through the semester I realized that I wasn’t giving time for the students to process the silent class so I lengthened the class to its full time, 80 minutes. Silence prevailed for the normal hour, then I turned the music off, put on my coat and we all went out for a quick walk up and down the alley. This was done impulsively on my part at first, but grew to become a ritual to end the silence with walking and talking about anything and gave a breath of space before they returned to focus on how this particular silent class experience

helped or hindered their progress as writers. They chose whether to talk about what happened or to free-write with this focus in mind. Their responses gave me ideas for future classes. It was in this feedback time that I found out about their preference for “teaching” rather than “discussing”.

Did the silence produce the result I hoped for? I would have to say yes. They wrote and responded fluently, (a reasonable amount, compared to the quantity I wrote, and reasonably well; very few errors), and with a directness that was not naturally or culturally easy to achieve. I had these same students in other classes and I noticed that they never hesitated to write and they completed assignments reasonably well and always in the allotted time. I also noticed a remarkable improvement in writing in one student who currently is taking the middle level writing course with me, especially when I compare her with students in that second class who had not had the silent class experience.

Mapping

This exciting technique as described in Tony Buzan’s *The Mind Map Book* (1993) revolutionized my teaching in many areas. Basically Buzan demonstrates that visually mapping anything (a book, a concept, a lecture, a holiday etc.) taps the brain’s potential. It asks students to engage in higher order thinking skills like analyzing, organizing and classifying. By choosing images and key words, the student increases concentration and saves time as compared with standard outlining. By saving time, the student is more relaxed and the thinking process is improved. By using image and word, both sides of the brain are engaged which enhances harmony. In the beginning writing class I introduced mind-

mapping by showing the students a one- page mind- map I had done of the entire *Mind Map Book*. (See Mapping - Buzan in Appendix, page 51)

My students were curious but claimed to have no artistic ability. I smiled and said artistic ability is not necessary. I demonstrated the technique of moving from large (main ideas) writing or pictures, to small (detail) writing or pictures. I handed out unlined paper and crayons/colored pencils and asked them to use only pictures and single-word headings to make a one-day tour of their home-town. I also made one, surreptitiously observing at the same time.

I gave them a time limit of 10 minutes (which stretched to almost 15). Each then took a turn taking us on the tour by describing orally what they had just mapped. This mapping acted as schema building for the topic for their next writing exercise, which was a descriptive process. It forced the students to speak fluently and use new vocabulary, which would be recycled in the assignment and it also acted as an outline for organizing the sequence of the process. Feedback was positive for this activity. Students said they felt it was a quick way to help them organize their thoughts more easily. Student could choose to map or to outline their writing in future assignments.

Students also used mapping for reading, listening and note taking in other classes. I adapted this activity into mapping of different essay types, which I will explain in the next section.

Practicing Writing Skills

At the Sentence Level

It is obvious that a person can speak and write well in any language without knowing the terminology of parts of speech and the words to describe grammar. However, when writers

are struggling with a second or third language, I have found that it helps to have this vocabulary and be able to talk about it. I like to find out what they know and I did this in the first two weeks. I simply gave them the following list and asked them to write as much as they knew about each numbered item, and to give examples of each.

Terminology

1. countable noun
2. non-countable noun
3. adjective
4. adverb
5. comparative- superlative of
adjectives
6. comparative – superlative of
adverbs
7. transitive verb
8. intransitive verb

9. relative pronoun
10. article
11. clause
12. preposition
13. modal verb
14. pronoun
15. phrase
16. transition word
17. subject
18. object

I encouraged them to do this task as quickly as possible and not to linger over puzzling ones. I gave them about 15 – 20 minutes. Then I asked them to switch to a different color pen and note this color at the top of the page with the words “ 2nd Pass”. They then talked in pairs and circulated as they continued working on the task, talking about language and their understanding of each item. This took the entire 80 minutes of the class. They handed in their work and I reviewed the color-coded strong and weak areas. The latter became the focus for class instruction and some silent classes. I also tested the students on these terms throughout the semester as they learned more, in a similar manner with two colors of pen.

I learned this method from Lou Spaventa at SIT in the English Structures class (summer 2000). These were called grammar reviews. They looked like tests, but we were allowed to use notes or work with peers for the second passes which decreased the stress level and provoked much discussion and more learning.

The students and I used this language when they came for one-to-one conferencing. They used it when they edited each other’s work in class and it was a reference tool for talking about the differences they discovered between their own languages and English. It was also helpful in explaining derivatives as they expanded their vocabulary (agree-verb, agreeable – adjective, agreeably – adverb).

To continue to apply this terminology, I adapted Robert Hellstrom’s excellent one-page article from *TESOL Journal*, Spring 2000, in which he wrote about adding detail at the word, sentence and paragraph levels. In this class we worked at the sentence level first. I elicited a simple sentence from the students such as Marcos walked to the store, which I wrote on the board. The students identified the parts of

speech in this sentence and they copied the sentence. Then they looked up and saw the words “ Which or what kind?” which I had written over the word “Marcos”. These are the question words that create some detail about nouns. I elicited words from them to describe Marcos, and they wrote the sentence again with their own adjectives or adjective phrases. Then, one at a time, over each word I wrote a question word, which was meant to provoke some interesting descriptive word. They continued to recopy the sentence adding their own interesting detail.

Over the word “walks”, for example, I wrote “How?” and we talked about the -ly form for adverbs, which answer this question. Then they asked the “How?” question again of the adverb they chose. For example,

Marcos, my friend, walked quickly to the store.
 Question- How quickly? (very, extremely, so)
 I asked what question they would ask for the word “store”, and they usually said, which or what kind, and thus wrote the sentence again with this new detail.

A student had, at this point:

Marcos, my friend, walked very quickly to the
 small food market.

I elicited some more question words that had not been answered such as “When?” and “Why?” and asked what part of speech “to the market” is. I mentioned that we can string along up to three prepositional phrases with no problem in English i.e.” for some beer and chips for a salsa party in his dorm room tonight”. They played with these as they answered the last two question words. I circulated behind the students and helped as asked. They then shared these marvelous, long sentences in pairs or threes and wrote up

the most interesting on the board. I asked them to look in their own descriptive writing and choose five simple sentences to expand with more detail to work on either in class or as homework.

This deliberate in-class expanding of a sentence had its rewards. When I noticed a place in an essay, which could use more detail, I simply wrote ++ in the margin as the student had already been empowered with the technique to analyze and expand some or all of the sentence in question.

Although having the labels for words in English might theoretically have fueled the stifling “editor” and slow down writing, I found the opposite to be true. Talking about language requires a new vocabulary just as talking about fishing has its own terminology. Knowing the words actually increased fluency. Students had more choice of correct word forms in creating longer sentences, which contribute to cohesion. They were able to describe what they wanted to say more accurately and then write it without hesitation. For example, I saw good improvement in my Taiwanese student who wrote with astonishingly creative adjectives but the word these adjectives modified was sometimes a noun and sometimes a verb. Discovering the difference between nouns and verbs by asking himself the questions in the sentence-expanding exercise above was a major breakthrough for him.

At the Paragraph Level

To begin the focus on the paragraph, I passed out a short excerpt from Forrest Carter’s book *The Education of Little Tree* (1976):

“Now I was six. Maybe it was my birthday that reminded Granma time was passing. She lit the lamp nearly every evening and read, and pushed me on my dictionary studying. I was down into the B’s and one of

the pages was torn out. Granma said that page was not important, and the next time me and Granpa went to the settlement, he paid for and bought the dictionary from the library. It cost seventy-five cents.” (p.144)

I asked the students to notice the subjects of each sentence and what they referred back to. We discussed given information versus new information and where each occurred in a sentence and thus learned about fluency of thought, which creates a cohesive paragraph. We also looked at sentence length and how the flow of writing was affected by the short sentences. I asked them to find the sentence, which was being supported by all the others in the paragraph. They learned the words “topic sentence” and I wrote a few examples for them to turn the controlling idea into a question.

Examples:

Marriage has its good and bad sides.

Topic Controlling idea: What are the good and bad sides of marriage?

Exercise increases mental alertness.

Topic Controlling idea: What is the evidence for increased mental alertness after exercising?

Students used the quick writing fluency skills they had acquired through free-writing and the silent class to practice writing cohesively. As a first task we all worked collaboratively to write chain stories. For this task each student had a clean sheet of paper and all wrote the same topic sentence at the top. Example: “She sat and waited.” Each student then added one sentence (while thinking about cohesion, hopefully). After less than a minute, I gave a signal and everyone passed the papers in the same direction. They read the new sheet and added one sentence, then continued passing and adding a sentence. The rule I made was that they could not use the names of any person in the class in their writing. This eliminated silly and possibly unkind or embarrassing remarks.

I also participated and we made several rounds, depending on the number of students in the class. (With eight students it takes about one hour to read and contribute to eight stories.) We quit when one side of the sheet was filled. Then I collected and numbered each story quickly and the students jotted down those numbers on a scrap of paper. I read the stories aloud with great expression and the students graded them 1 (worst) to 10 (best) on cohesion only. After the scoring was tallied, I made copies of several for further analysis. This student-generated material is usually funny and easy to analyze for cohesion.

In the next class I put up some one-word topic choices which were related to a reading they were doing for another class and asked them to write a paragraph with a topic sentence. I told them that this kind of quick writing is similar to an essay test question in regular classes and has a time limit. They had only 15 minutes for this task. In pairs, they exchanged papers. I asked them to consider this heuristic, which I passed out to each pair:

1. Stop reading after you decide what the topic sentence is. Write down what you think the writer is going to talk about.
2. Keep reading. Are you right?
3. Ask writer, “Were you able to finish your paragraph?”
4. Ask writer, “How does each sentence relate to the controlling idea?”
5. Ask writer, “How did you achieve cohesion between sentences?”
6. Ask writer, “What could you do to make this more cohesive?”

After this exercise students expressed frustration in not being able to finish their paragraphs. They thought having to choose a topic was time-consuming and one topic would have been better. Wording the topic sentence also took more time than they thought it would. In spite of the frustration, they were pleased at how much they wrote (about two thirds of a page) and how fluently and cohesively they managed to write.

Most confessed they really didn't think about cohesion, but their writing was able to keep up with their thinking. This was very surprising to them and to me. They wanted to practice just writing topic sentences which we did in the next class. As a first exercise in writing a reasonable amount in a reasonable time period in reasonably good English, this was a success. Certainly there would be revisions of small mechanical errors but the production of fluent content at the paragraph level was achieved.

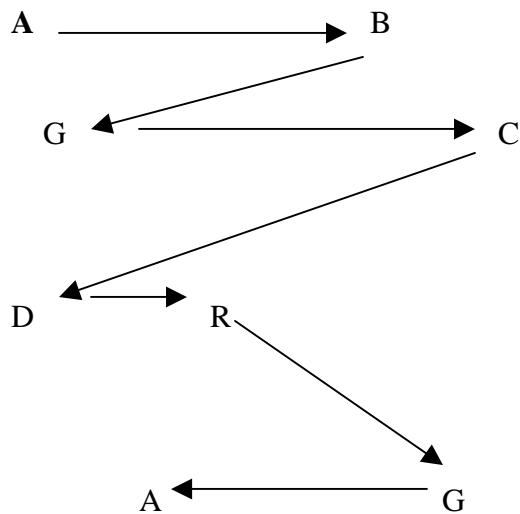
Other topics for in-class timed paragraph writing were designed to focus on particular vocabulary or structures. They explored emotion words by writing sensory poems and they wrote letters of appreciation to each other and described pictures of faces and large action pictures. All of these writing exercises were done in class, discussed in pairs or small groups using some or all of the questions described in the Writing Process or specific heuristics for the particular task.

At the Essay Level

Before exploring organization of essays, I talked about logic in writing and mentioned the findings of the research of Robert Kaplan (1966) in which he explored how cultural thought patterns influence language learning and writing. I drew four large rectangles on the board (portrait shape) to demonstrate how individuals from each culture tend to answer an American professor's assignment,

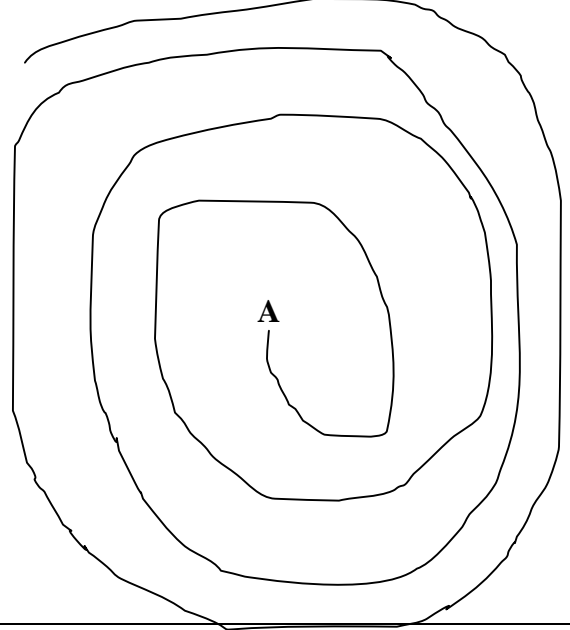
“Write about A”.

A Spanish/Portugese student writes



And the Professor says,” Stay on the subject!”
and the students gets an F.

The Japanese student writes and the Professor says, "When are you going to get to the point?" and the student gets an F.



The Arabic speaking student writes

A_____

and

A _____

and

and

A _____

and the Professor says, “ Say it once and tell

The North American student writes

A – Introduction

A – Support with examples and evidence

A – Conclusion

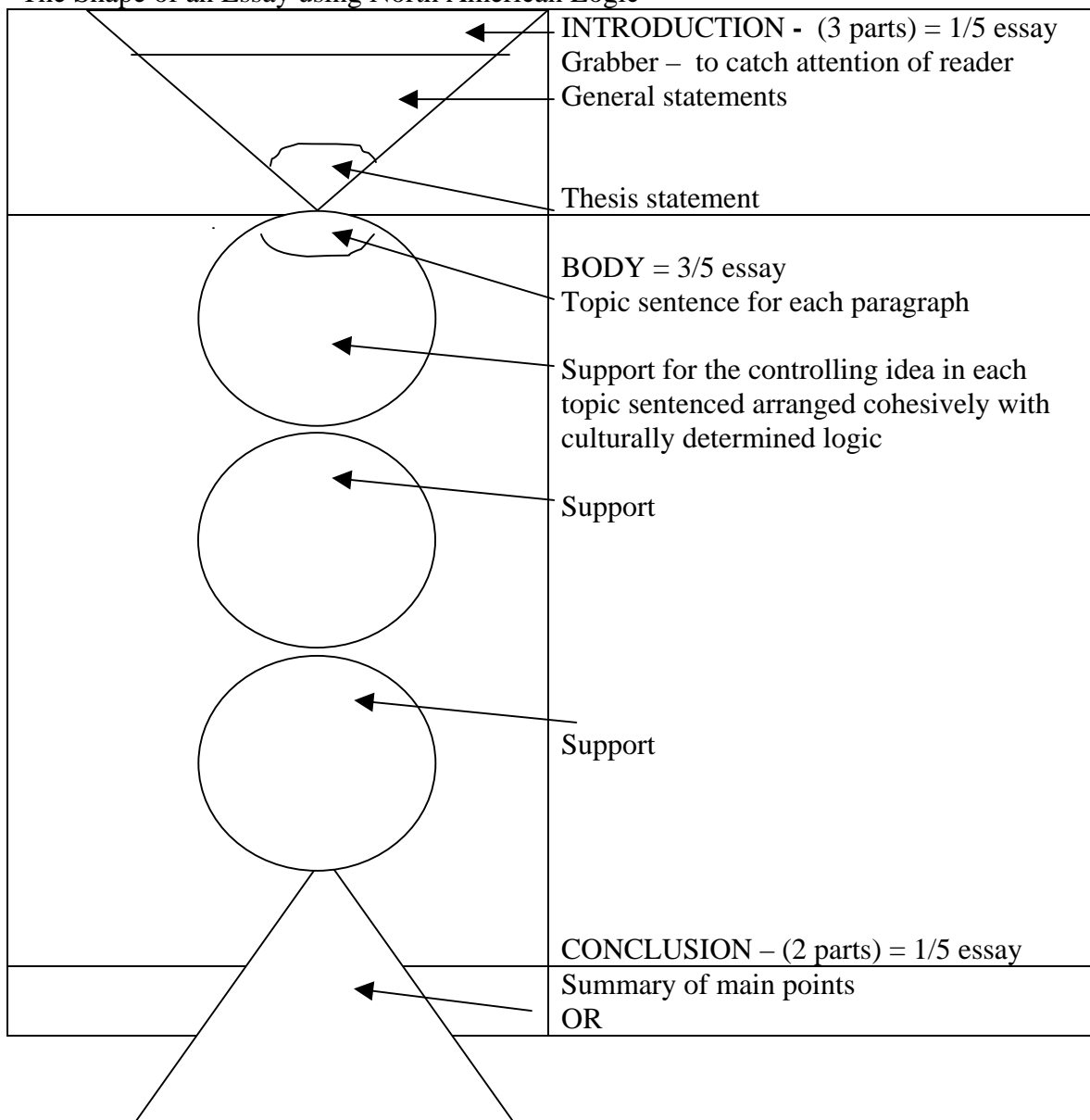


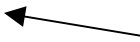
The Professor smiles and the student gets a nice grade of A or B.

me something new!”, and the student gets an F.

I told the students that they are all excellent writers in their own languages and within their own cultural logic patterns. Not only do they now have to learn to write acceptable English, but they must also learn to follow the logic pattern of North American culture, which is what college professors look for in a well-organized piece of writing. I explained about what normally goes in an Introduction, Body and Conclusion of a typical college essay.

The Shape of an Essay using North American Logic



	Paraphrase of the thesis statement
	Own opinion or new thought

I passed out a one-page descriptive essay similar to Newsweek's weekly "My Turn" essay. Students numbered the paragraphs in the article and by working alone or together decided on the shape of this essay and discuss which paragraphs from the article go in which parts of the diagram they drew. I deliberately chose an essay which was not very challenging as far as vocabulary and concepts go, as the task was hard enough without those added difficulties.

In this class, students only wrote three essays, during the semester, up to three or four pages each. The first was a descriptive essay of a film which produced a strong emotional response. They wrote a short film summary and an explanation of why or how this movie connected with them personally (Willey&Berne,1997). The second was a comparison/contrast of themselves as speakers of two languages, and the third was a five-page research paper (title page, three pages of text, reference page) in which students learned how and when to cite references, and how to format title and reference pages.

For each essay, we had a "noticing" class. I presented a clear and simply written sample example and students then created a mapping of what they noticed about the organization of the essay before they moved on to talking about possible topics for their own essays. They began to brainstorm on paper and lastly began to write. For these three essays students moved through the steps of the writing process (see Chapter Two).

The students were very apprehensive at the idea of writing three-to-four page essays. The length was daunting. A paragraph was the most they had ever written.

However, once they had mapped out their ideas and actually started to write, they could see that an essay was not such a frightening task when taken one paragraph at a time. I deliberately scheduled deadlines for drafts of these essays so that the students would be pushed to write quickly and exercise the skills of fluent writing they had built through practice with many in-class paragraph-writing exercises. Again, this was a realistic simulation of when the students move on to regular college classes and have many papers all due at the same time.

In reviewing the three areas described above, all of which were designed to promote fluency, I find it impossible to pinpoint one technique as being the most effective. They were all interrelated not only with each other but also with all the elements of community building as described in Chapter 2. What was most obvious to me was that the students were producing work more quickly, which was more organized, had richer vocabulary and was completed within a given time frame. The following example is typical of the progress of all the students. This is a middle paragraph taken from an essay written at the semester start entitled “What makes me Taiwanese” (verbatim and used with permission):

“ Second cause is food. Chinese food is very famous in the world. Chinese food’s types have nothing in common. Chinese eat a lot of rich in the three meals. In the breakfast, we eat congee, vegetable, egg and so on. In the lunch and dinner, we eat cooked rice, meat and so on. The different foods make me different.” 23 year old business student from Taiwan

In a content-based class the same student answered this test question in ten minutes at the semester end: “There is a plebiscite called and you are Puerto Rican. How do you vote?”

“If I were Puerto Rico citizen, I will vote Independent, because our country is not America. Even though America gave us much help such as

build highway, hospital or airport, we are a county with a past. Therefore I think that we can control and build our country without America. In addition, we must keep our own culture. If we become a state of America, our kids may think they are Americans not Puerto Ricans. The question is very complicated for ourselves so I think that we had better vote Independent.”

To conclude this chapter I would like to present the total in pages that students wrote for this course in one 15-week semester.

Kind of Writing	# of pages/wk	Typed or handwritten	Total pages in semester
Free writing	6	H	90
Response writing	1	T	15
Essays 1 and 2 (3 pages each)		T	6
Essay 3 (5 pages)		T	5
In-class writing exercises	2	H	30
TOTAL 146			

This does not include the many revisions of the essays and exercises, which would, if added up, probably increase the total by a dozen or more pages.

In previous semesters, I gave opportunity for some free-writing, worked with the students on short in-class writing exercises and taught the different ways essays are organized. I did not teach mapping, I did not use silence and I did not deliberately move from word to sentence to essay and I did not see the remarkable improvement in fluency that the students in this class achieved. I am convinced that the three techniques described in this chapter empowered the students in ESL 100 to become fluent writers during this semester, and that the 150 pages they wrote, whether they worked on them carefully and made revisions or whether they simply tossed them, was the single most significant cause of increased fluency.

“ I think it was thanks to daily writing practice I learned to use articles correctly and improve the most my writing.” psychology student from Japan.

CHAPTER FOUR

Adaptations for a Higher Level Writing Class

At the same time that I was creating and teaching the lower level class, during the fall of 2001, I was also teaching ESL 250 College Writing, which is the highest level our Intensive English Program offers. The course grants three college credits. The official goals of the class are for students to learn the organization of five of the most commonly required college essays and to produce one of each. In addition, students learn how to analyze and answer essay type questions. This course met three hours per week in two 80-minute classes. There were 12 students total, from Germany, Ecuador, Japan, Morocco, Iran, Bosnia, Switzerland and Spain. All of the students in ESL 250 were taking two or three regular college classes at the same time, plus one or two other ESL classes. Most of the students in this class were exchange students, taking their junior year abroad. The average age was 21 and most had completed about eight years study of English which resulted in them having very high expressive and receptive language skills. Five were business students, three biology majors, one psychology major, one pre-med, and two with undecided majors.

Although writing fluency and increased confidence are not the major goals in the advanced class, there were times when adapting or modifying nearly all of the techniques

I described in Chapters Two and Three enhanced the learning of the advanced-level students. In this chapter I will describe how and why I adapted some of these techniques.

Writing Process

In Chapter Two, I explained why the advanced-level students didn't react positively to Cassidy's Writing Process steps due to their more secure position in the CLL continuum. In spite of their apparent boredom and reluctance to work in pairs I still wanted to impress upon them the importance of the learning which accompanies revision and the need for writing several drafts. Their negativity was affecting classroom dynamics and their writing progress. What I did to resolve this about a third of the way into the semester, which I will explain in a moment, is what I know now I should have done at the beginning of the class. It would have clarified to them exactly why I was asking them to go through the writing process step by step.

I drew two identical pictures on the blackboard of a forest with three trees with frames around each. I explained that when a person looks at a task, sometimes they see the forest, the whole picture, and sometimes they see the trees, the detail. They talked in pairs about what their own tendencies were. This was interesting for them, as they had never thought about how they looked at things. I explained that even though most of them said they saw the "whole picture", that there are detailed steps which were necessary for them to take in this class to become better writers. I drew a series of approximately 12 stair steps and wrote the words "a single letter" on step 1, then "a word" on step 2, "a sentence" on step 3, and "final draft" on the top step, number 12 (see page 52 in Appendix). I asked them what I should put on the empty middle steps,

planning that they would get to “paragraph” and “essay” half-way up the stairs. I then filled in the rest of the empty steps with the different steps of the writing process: content copy (sloppy copy), peer revision, editing, revision, draft one, revision at Writing Center, ending with the final draft. I asked them to name a famous author in their own country, out loud. Then I asked if they truly thought that these writers published their first draft. This explanation helped them to see the sense of the writing process; they were able to see where the steps were leading them. In subsequent classes they participated in a much more positive way.

From the start I would change the terminology for the various drafts for advanced students. Instead of “sloppy copy”, I would use “content draft”. Instead of “discovery copy”, I would use the words “mechanics draft“. These have a more professional sound and are more straightforward in meaning.

Free-Writing

At this level, I did not have the advanced-students free-write every day. They had no problem putting words on a page quickly and confidently. Instead, I introduced free-writing as one type of brainstorming technique by modeling, as I had for the lower level class, on the blackboard. They first listed some topics they were comfortable writing about, such as a city, food at the college, sports, etc., and after they chose their topics and had written continuously and quickly for five minutes, I asked them to stop and circle a phrase or sentence they liked. They then cut it out, pasted it on a fresh sheet of paper and continued to write for another five minutes. This looping method some students found to be a way to search in depth into a topic; other students preferred to make lists or maps/bubbles.

Mapping

I introduced mapping to this class in the same way I had done with the lower level class, by showing my own mind map of Buzan's book and explaining its organization, and my process. I asked them to make a mind-map of their lives. They brought these to the next class and posted them on the board and circulated to look at them all. They were rich in detail and each uniquely designed (see example in Appendix, page 54). I encouraged students to map their essays before or after they wrote them and many came to prefer this to outlining. I believe this particular technique, which stimulated creativity and right-brain activity, was popular with these students because in the majority of their other classes, syllabi were organized around lectures, which are very linear, logical and use mostly left-brain activity. I will return to this topic later.

Writing Terminology

I would definitely include this activity, which I described in Chapter Three, page 19, with all writing classes I teach, and I would do it just the same way except I might add # 19 topic sentence and # 20 thesis statement. The more advanced students would likely complete the task more quickly but at least they would all be empowered with the

vocabulary necessary to talk about their writing, not just with me but also with Writing Center tutors and other professors.

Some students take ESL content-based classes which have a writing component; they may or may not simultaneously be taking a separate ESL writing course. I would provide an extra class for these students in which they would respond to the language terminology list in the same way the writing course students had done, with pen/pencils of two different colors. This would empower them to talk about their writing with the same language and same understanding as those students who are taking writing classes and give them needed language to discuss any writing they do for regular college courses.

Practicing Writing Skills

In this chapter I have described several ways to practice writing with response writing and different writing forms within the silent class. The technique that received the most positive feedback in the advanced class was the work we did on exploring various elements of style. I selected six of these elements from the excellent McConochie (2002) article: rhetorical questions, coherence, adding detail, parallelism, overwriting/underwriting and parenthetical expressions. I presented one every week or two. Students enjoyed the challenge of trying to inject these elements in their writing and felt they had some useful tools to write better. They could see that the rhythm of their writing was changing to sound “more American” and this was very gratifying to them. I have felt an urge to try to teach some of these elements of style at lower level classes but I make myself resist. These students simply don’t have the facility nor the vocabulary to exercise these kinds of literary gymnastics. The only one that met with some success was

rhetorical questions but it became overworked by every student in nearly every paragraph from then on.

Contributing to a Sense of Community

At the start of each class, students chatted for a few minutes with me about how they were doing in general or about some current topic. This was important in bringing them together and helping to create community. They also established a relationship with me in one-to-one conferencing. This not only helped to bring the students into my world and me into theirs but also transferred directly and positively on our relationship in class. Although I am sure that the weekly response writing, which I did with ESL 100 students, would have provided some interesting responses had I done it with these advanced level students, I would do this much differently with them. There is no particular reason why they have to respond to just me, the instructor. I would give a few examples of topics, such as: Trees in my Life, Home, Heroes, etc. and elicit more topics from the students. Each would choose a different topic and write a one-page essay. I would volunteer to go first to model this so they would see the depth to which they can engage themselves personally in this short piece of writing. Each week a different student would read his/her essay and hand out a copy to each student and each week the other students and instructor would react to some aspect or to the title of the reader's essay in a one-page response. The reader would have the chance to read all of these responses to his essay. These essays would not be graded nor corrected, unless so requested by a student. What would this do? It would allow deeper involvement of the class into each other's lives and

contribute to a sense of community. It would also put the student in the driver's seat and allow the instructor to observe and participate.

Silence

The purpose of silence in the lower-level ESL writing class was to provoke direct responses and fluency of response. I would include this technique for a different purpose in the higher level class as these students already have achieved a fairly high degree of fluency and directness, rather, I might modify this and use it once or twice in a semester in the following way after first having made the focus of this exercise very clear.

“During the silent class you will have the opportunity to discuss a topic by writing questions and answers with a partner. Later you will practice writing a succinct summary using strategies presented in class to reduce the number of words.”

As the students come in to the silent class (with quiet music playing), I would direct their attention to the writing on the board, which says, “Please sit with a partner.” Next I would pass out a writing prompt to each student. This could be a short article or poem on a provocative subject, something about which everyone would have an opinion. I would have them free-write responses, opinions and thoughts for about ten minutes on the reading. Then, on the board, I would write,

“Please discuss your thoughts about this article/poem by asking and answering questions with your partner, on a new sheet of paper. I will put some questions on the board which you can glance at, if you run out of ideas. There is no talking, please.” I would let them “discuss” for 15 - 20 minutes and then on the board write,

” Please write a succinct summary in 25 words or less about what you discussed.”

At a flick of the light or a change of music, I would let them know that the silence was over. This would be a good time to pass out bits of paper and ask for immediate feedback on the experience which should be shared with the whole group. (See Read-Back Feedback in Appendix, page 53). One thing that might be asked is, “Would you like to have another silent class?” Or “What did you learn about your writing in this silent class?”

Students at this advanced level can do much more within the silence because of their writing fluency. There is no limit to the kind of practice writing which can be requested in the silence, depending of course, on the situation prompt. Paraphrasing, mapping a main point for each paragraph, writing a letter to the editor, writing letters of advice to the lovelorn or troubled, composing love poems, and writing a fairy tale with certain required vocabulary words (key, prince, tower, magic) are just a few possibilities.

To sum up this chapter, I would suggest the following:

TECHNIQUE	USE WITH ANY LEVEL UNMODIFIED	MODIFY OR ALTER FOR HIGHER LEVEL CLASS
Writing Process		X
One-to-one Conferencing	X	
Response Writing		X
Terminology of Writing	X	
Silent class		X
Mapping	X	
Writing Practice		X

Once an instructor is familiar with the basic techniques described for use in a lower-level class, they will find there is no end to their creative possibilities with higher-level students.

CHAPTER FIVE

OBSERVATIONS AND CONCLUSION

Observations

Prior to creating three levels of writing classes and prior to attending the MAT program, my approach to teaching writing was very traditional. Students' writing was not process oriented, a large part of the class was devoted to grammar teaching and review and the writing activities were not particularly purposeful. There was only one writing class per semester and the level of English of the students ran from beginner to advanced in each class. I would give an assignment of a topic of my choice and the more able students would have to write three or four pages and the less able perhaps one.

Teaching was individualized and classes were small with three to six students.

It was true that students did progress, but often not to the point where they could manage the required freshman college writing class. It was distressing for us to have the professors of the writing classes and other regular courses contact our Intensive English Program complaining about the poor writing of an international student who had taken the one ESL writing course and who was now floundering in their courses. This is the reason I began to develop the curriculum to include advanced level courses. The curriculum committee considered the IEP petition for course changes and granted three credits for each advanced level course. The new policy of the IEP stipulates that a

student must have a B average of advanced level ESL courses to be able to take 100% regular college courses. The development of these different levels coincided with my newly acquired knowledge in the Master's program at SIT, and I was excited to integrate and implement this learning as I developed the new curriculum. In this chapter I will mention some feedback from advanced-level students now taking regular college classes, why I believe these techniques worked and what I learned from writing this IPP.

Feedback

Feedback from students who took ESL 250 and are currently taking regular college classes have written the following:

- "I have been using your methods in nearly all the courses. The most useful was organizing a paper and how to do a good research paper." Business student, Spain
- "I use the method of analysis of short-essay questions a lot so I can answer what the question is asking" Ecology student, Ecuador
- "The structure of a paper helped me a lot also the citations. This will also help me when I go home." Business student, Germany
- "I use outlining, reference cards for citations all the time." Education student, Japan.

The four degree-seeking students from the ESL 250 course who went on to take the required freshman writing course in the spring semester each received B's in that course. In that same class four American students failed. The following is a verbatim e-mail from Michael Wityk, the professor of the Spring '02 freshman-writing class, to the Director of the IEP:

"Our crop of INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS faired [sic] pretty well in terms of the final evaluation and, for the most part, I am very encouraged with their commitment to the revision process, attendance/participation and overall performance in the portfolio. DRUMROLL PLEASE"

Of the four students who took ESL 100, only one remained for the Spring '02 semester. I was particularly interested in her progress in the two sociology classes she took, because she had only taken that one lower-level writing course in the fall. I was teaching both of her ESL classes in the spring semester ('02) so I was able to chat with her about her classes although at no time did she ask me to look over any of her writing for her sociology courses. At the end of the semester she wrote me, "By the way, I got a plus score (plus, nothing or minus is Dr. Devries' scoring system) for the Minorities 8pp paper which I wrote in 4 days last week! So I'm sure my writing has improved very much." (psychology student ,Japan).

Why These Techniques Worked

Response Writing

I believe the success of this technique came about because of was the intensely personal nature of the topics and the fact that I modeled the type of writing first and showed my openness and vulnerability. This was an invitation to the students to write with more detail from the heart. It was also liberating for them to know that this writing would not be corrected.

Free Writing

The friendly competitive Derby Writing of each Friday provided the students with tangible proof of improvement of their writing fluency. Such a simple matter of counting words, for both "winners" and "losers", was an excellent motivator, which spurred the students to write more quickly the next time.

Silent Class

The success of this class was related to its novelty at first and to the very small class. The activities were varied. Immediate and direct responses were achieved through the silent interactions using small whiteboards and by “discussing” using large sheets of paper. I have no source for this but I remember hearing that Mozart’s music stimulates writing. As quiet background music, it seemed to work.

Writing Practice

I chose to have these low-level students deliberately begin to create and expand sentences first by analyzing terminology, then by creating paragraphs. I found that this gave them basic vocabulary to talk about their writing in peer editing sessions and provided security for writing. Grabe and Kaplan (1996) write that ” Writing is a technology, a set of skills which must be practiced and learned through experience.” (p.7). “These skills do not come naturally, but rather are gained through conscious effort and much practice” (ibid). I strongly agree with these statements and found that combining deliberate in-class practice (with immediate feedback from peers/instructor), with freer non-corrected work such as the response writing and free writing gave students ample opportunity to apply what they were learning. Students were then able to easily progress to writing longer essays by entering the key words or phrases in the diagram of essay shape.

Noticing Writing

Whenever I wanted to introduce something new, I always presented a sample of this for the students to notice, whether citations or a particular type of essay organization. I did a lot of waiting to see what they would observe. I had to force myself not to jump in

and comment on their comments; I simply wrote them down on the board and waited patiently. This was an excellent way to force them to analyze more closely and come up with ideas in a quiet atmosphere. I found that if I started to inject some information, they would immediately bow to my authority and stop working.

Sheer Quantity

Although this may not fall into a “technique”, I am convinced that the 150 pages or so that each student wrote was a huge factor in each of them gaining in both fluency and confidence. The only reference I can make for this is in comparing it with the less dramatic progress in classes in which the students wrote considerably fewer pages. Next time I teach this, I will let the students know, halfway through the semester and also at the end, just how many pages they have written. I know they will be shocked and delighted.

Conclusion

What I learned from writing this paper is how very much I have developed as a person and as a teacher. I have found that writing and revising these pages has instilled in me more confidence, just as writing those 150 pages did for my low-level students. I know I am more flexible. I tried some fairly weird techniques (weird in others’ eyes). I persisted with the weekly silent day and responded to students’ feedback about it and worked with the students in different ways within the silence. I was able to abandon the “I know everything, I am the almighty power” type of thinking and allow myself to take suggestions from the students and not feel diminished.

I realize now that before my SIT experience, I was teaching from a place of fear. I was very intimidated by the generation gap, I was paralyzed that I would not be in control of every moment and I was very fearful of my lack of knowledge about whatever I was teaching. I felt like I was a fraud. There was no room in this panicky mentality for any kind of reflection. It is painful to say this but I was truly a snob about English. I believed that if students couldn't say what they wanted, their writing had no value. I was a correction freak. I never wrote encouraging remarks. I smiled occasionally and was not totally ineffectual as a teacher but when I think back, I cringe inwardly and am thankful that these students were a forgiving lot.

Now, I bring my teaching/learning journal to every class and it is a great comfort and an empowering agent for me. At least three or four times a week there is an opportunity to catch a moment in a class to jot down an observation, question or thought which results in some slight shift in my thinking (see journal sample in Appendix, page 56). I frequently ask for feedback, not just on students' understanding of content but also on how I am teaching (see Appendix, page 53). I am learning to value all writing at all levels. I make conscious effort to bridge the generation gap with conferences, meals at my house and chats in class. I am a kinder person and I like myself a whole lot more. I am learning to teach from this place within me with confidence and love.

On this continuum of my teaching life, I realize I have still many miles to go, but I am pleased that I have been able to create writing curriculum which meets students' needs, and I have come up with innovative, exciting and effective ways to stimulate timid ESL students in becoming confident and fluent writers of English.

APPENDIX

Process Writing Steps and Questions adapted from On Our Way: A Student-Centered, Process Approach to Language Learning by Maggie Cassidy with Kathleen Whallon. Unpublished paper written at SIT 1986.

STEP 1 Brainstorm Topics Lists, maps Free write: A place, an event, a thing, an idea guided visualization	Share Writer - Read list aloud to partner Reader - What would you like to write about and why? (then switch)	STEP 2 Brainstorm Details About chosen topic List Map Free write	Share W. Read details aloud
STEP 3 "Sloppy Copy" (content) Content -Draft 1 Write what you want to say. Getting the ideas down in any way	Share W. Read draft aloud to partner R. What do you think of this piece? What else should the reader know? W. asks some, all or none of these questions What's the main idea?" "Do the details relate to the main idea?" "Which parts do you like best? Why?" "Are there parts where you need more detail? Examples?" "Did you ever get confused?" "Did the opening get your attention?" "Is the ending satisfactory?"	STEP 4 Revision Copy (content) Content -Draft 2 W. Consider feedback Take reader's point of view Reflect on Opening Needed details Unnecessary details Sequence/clarity Transitions/flow Ending	Share W. Read revision aloud R. Listen openly How is this version different?
STEP 5 The Editor appears Edit for Spelling Punctuation Word order Agreement Tense Clauses	Share Pairs: Exchange papers. Using different colored pencils, students underline any questionable areas. They do not correct anything. When done, then they discuss one paper at a time and try to fix as much as possible collaboratively Revise and hand in as Draft One to teacher.	STEP 6 Publishing Read aloud Class notebook Tape record Illustrate Bulletin board Local newspaper	

Yellow Sheet – Instructor's Comments

Kaori _____ Holidays in Japan

I am so pleased to see improvement in your use of articles (and ~~o~~ use) Good job

I have a few questions

#1 Your Thesis Statement is clear and I expect you to follow the order you wrote there. You said you would write about New Year's, Christmas a Day of the Child. Did you follow that order?

#3 You write that everyone celebrates Christmas. Can you write some more? How do Japanese celeb it? Why? Do even non-Christians celebrate? This is very very interesting! Tell me more.

Conclusion This is very very well done

1
first draft Content 63/0 See Rubric for detailed scoring

Prudence

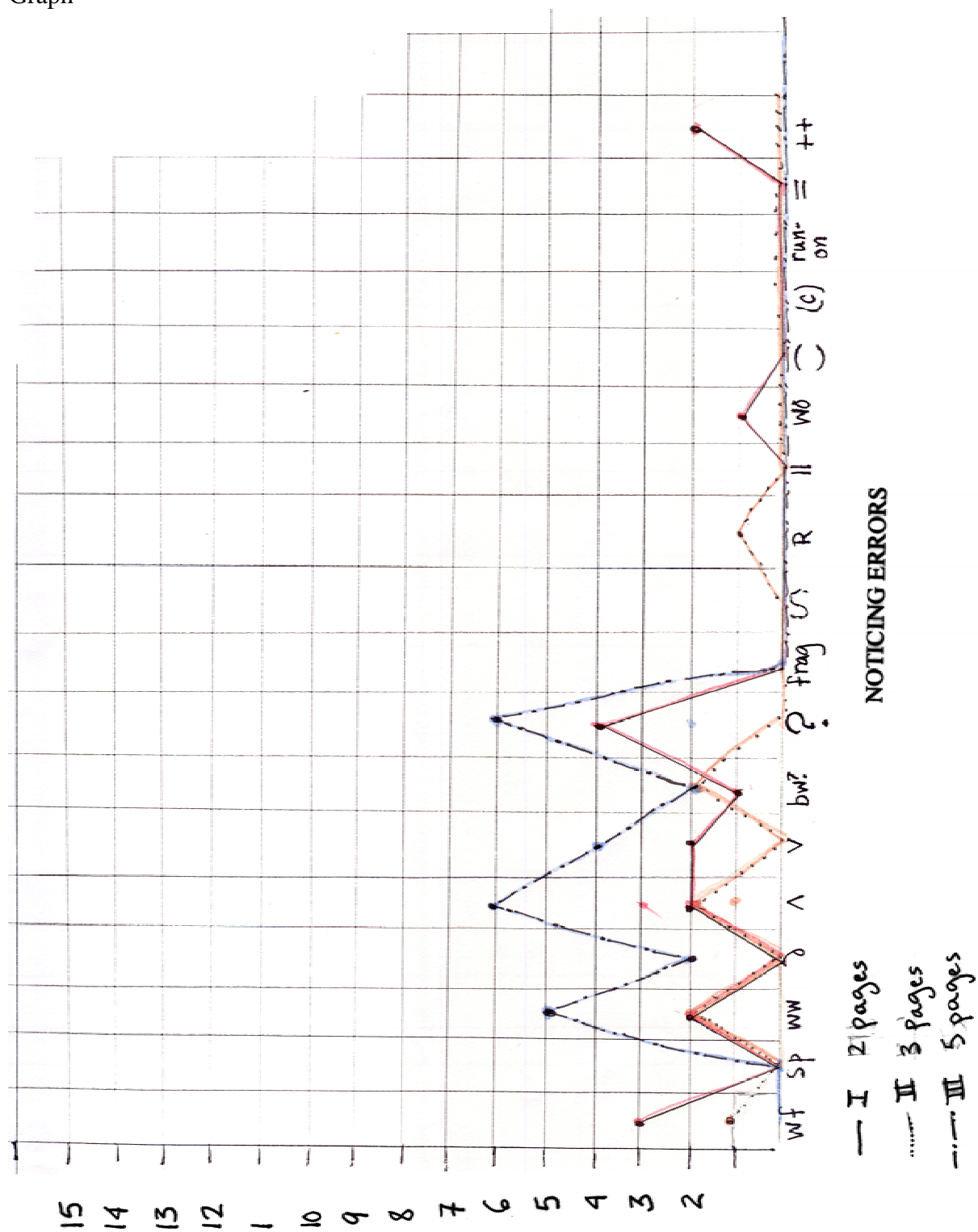
ESL 100 – Rubric for Essay 2 – Descriptive Essay # 2

Objectives:

To write a well organized three-page descriptive/reflective essay showing a personal connection to a film
To map the organization of the essay

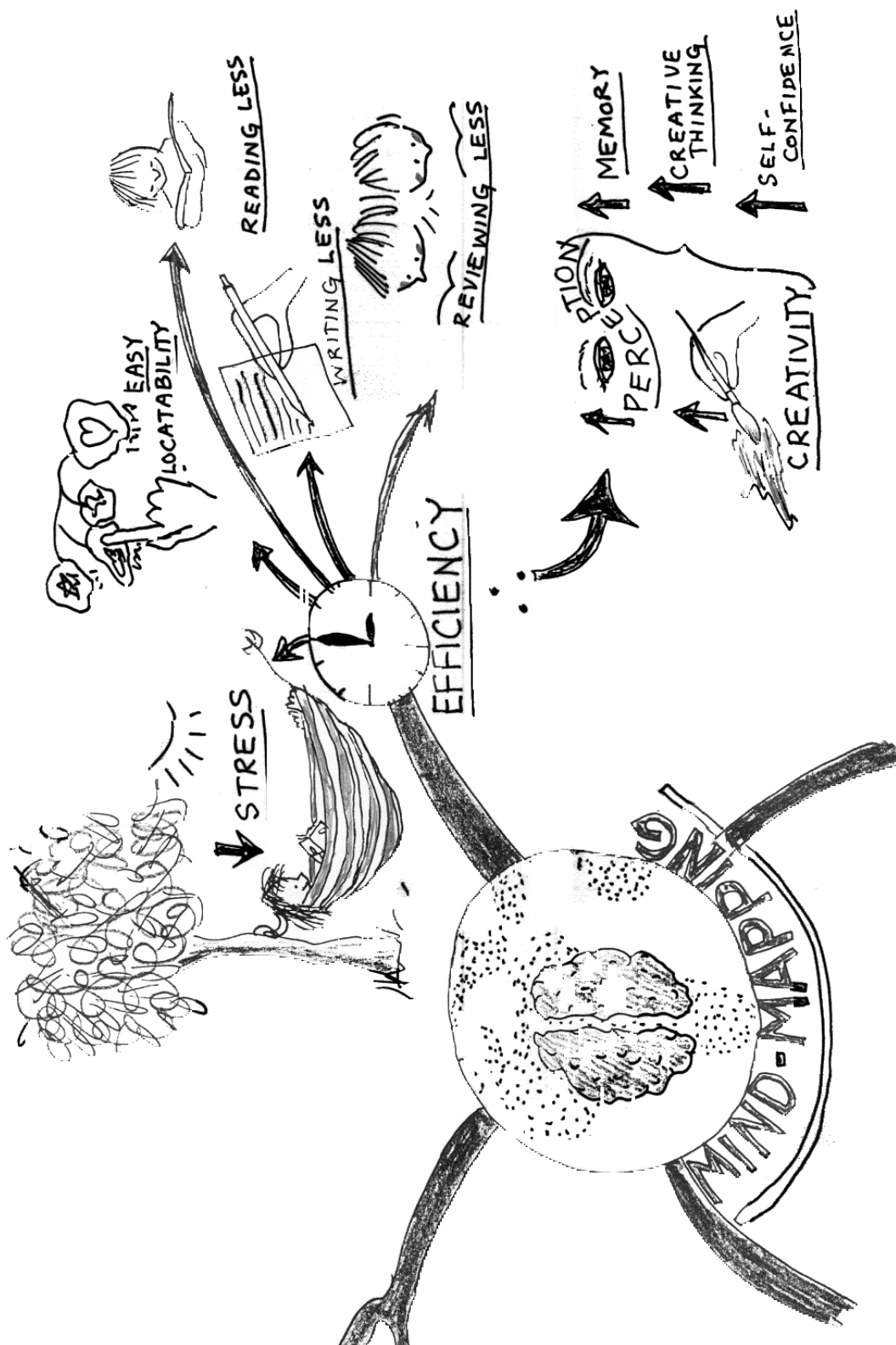
	Outline or Mapping	Description of the film 2/3 - 1 p.	Personal Connection 2/3 - 1 p.	Essay format and Organization	Mechanics
	10	20	30	20	20
Has mastered the material, is ready to move on	thorough	Rich choice of words Reader can imagine the plot, main characters and theme of the film There is a good variety of sentence types	Relevant and clearly described with a rich vocabulary	Clear essay format used, evidence of a grabber, a short introduction and a short conclusion. Essay cohesion is clear Evidence of topic sentences and unity within paragraphs.	(spelling, grammar, word order, punctuation) This is not addressed until the Final Draft)
Evidence of some learning, needs to review and practice	sketchy	Some good word choice, Reader cannot imagine all the elements listed above or they are listed but not as clear Most sentences are the same length.	The relevance and description are not as clear as above Word choice is basic	There is evidence of some organization but not as complete as described above. Paragraph unity may be lacking Cohesion may be less well done	
Needs to learn the material and practice	Absent or done incorrectly	Elements are missing or not clear to the reader Sentences are choppy or mostly fragments	Absent and/or not particularly relevant	Little or no attention to organization. Digressions, poor cohesion Paragraphs are missing or illogically organized.	

Errors
Graph

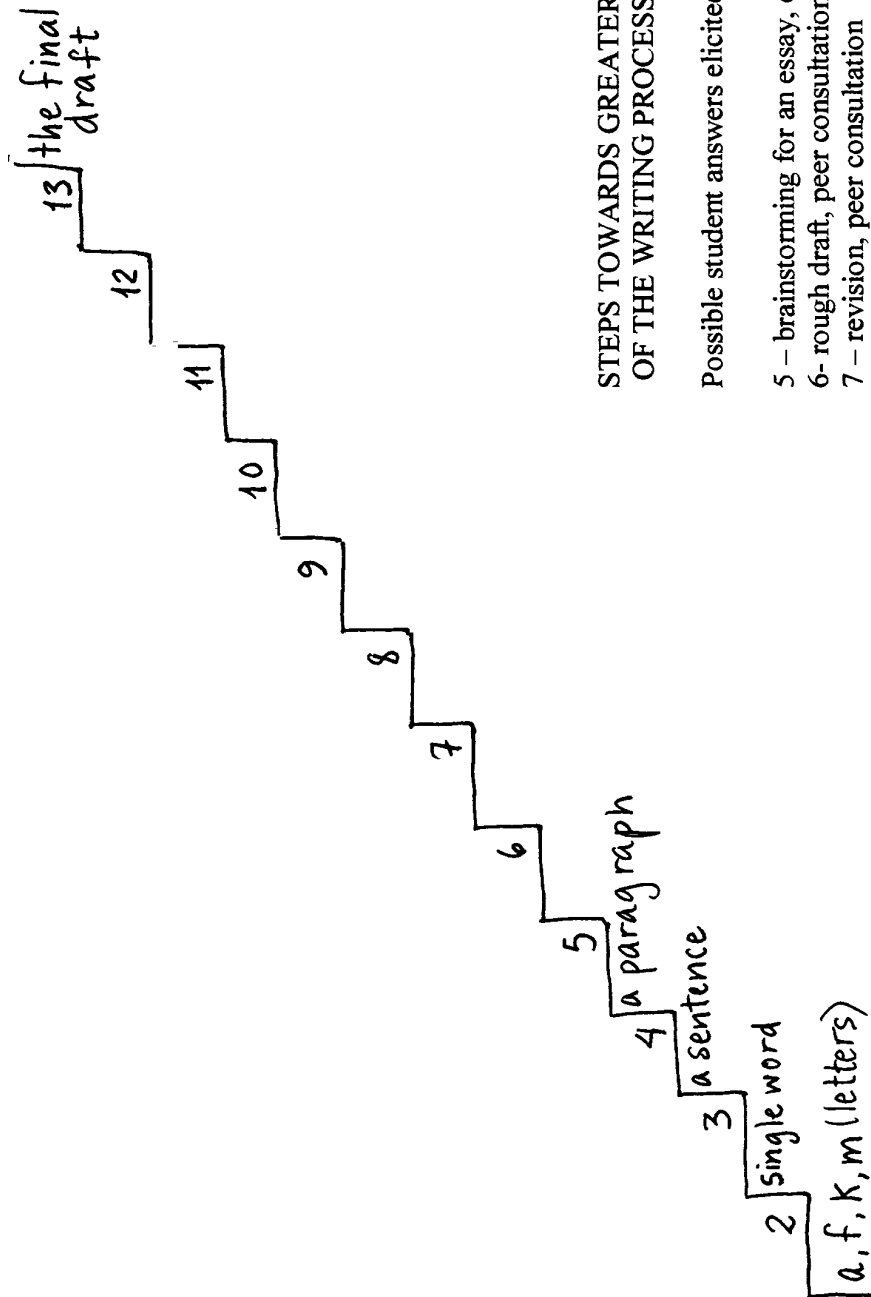


Response-Writing Topics

1. Student A chooses a best friend (B) from home. Student A pretends to be B and writes a letter to someone in this class, describing A in the third person.
2. A situation in which the student knocked over a huge pile of toys in a local store and writes three letters. The first is a formal letter of apology to the store manager. The second is a letter of apology in very simple English to his host family's six year old who was there at the store and was scared witless. The last one is a very informal descriptive letter to a best friend back home telling what happened.
3. Experiences in Writing (in any language)
4. Home
5. Trees in my Life
6. Books in my Life
7. A Tradition
8. Myself as a Piece of Nature (The writing assumes the shape of the piece of nature the person chooses to identify with.)
9. Business Letter (The writing the students respond to is actually a business letter addressed to them explaining this assignment.)
10. Heroes in my Life
11. If I Could Talk to Anybody
12. An Embarrassing Moment
13. Ten Years from Now



This is a black and white reproduction, (one quarter of it), of the wildly colorful mind map I did of Tony Buzan's entire book. It demonstrates the large to small drawing and lettering to indicate main ideas to detailed ideas.



STEPS TOWARDS GREATER UNDERSTANDING OF THE WRITING PROCESS

Possible student answers elicited for the unlabeled steps might be:

- 5 – brainstorming for an essay, one –page essay, rough draft
- 6- rough draft, peer consultation
- 7 – revision, peer consultation
- 8- draft one to Instructor
- 9 – one to one conference with Instructor
- 10 – revision
- 11 – Writing Center consultation
- 12 - revision

Read-Back Feedback

A Classroom Assessment Tool

This is a very quick way to get immediate and useful feedback on your teaching.

What to do:

Decide on one small area that you want feedback on.

Rip up some bits of scrap paper, about 2" x 2" and pass one to each student.

Ask the question or write a sentence to complete on the board.

Collect the bits (No folding and no names) and read them aloud.

Rationale for the success of this method.

It is quick. It is immediate. It is relevant. Students love hearing all the voices of the classmates, which might not occur with the question asked orally. Students are empowered by their input into the teaching process. You hear from all the students.

Sample types of questions (You will think of dozens of others specific to your material)

How do you feel right now about

the pace of the class?

your understanding/learning?

What percent of this material do you feel you understand?

If you were teaching this material right now would you review or move on?

Complete this sentence

Today's class was...

The most confusing thing today was...

What I will remember about today's class is ...

The hardest (or easiest) part/concept/example today was...

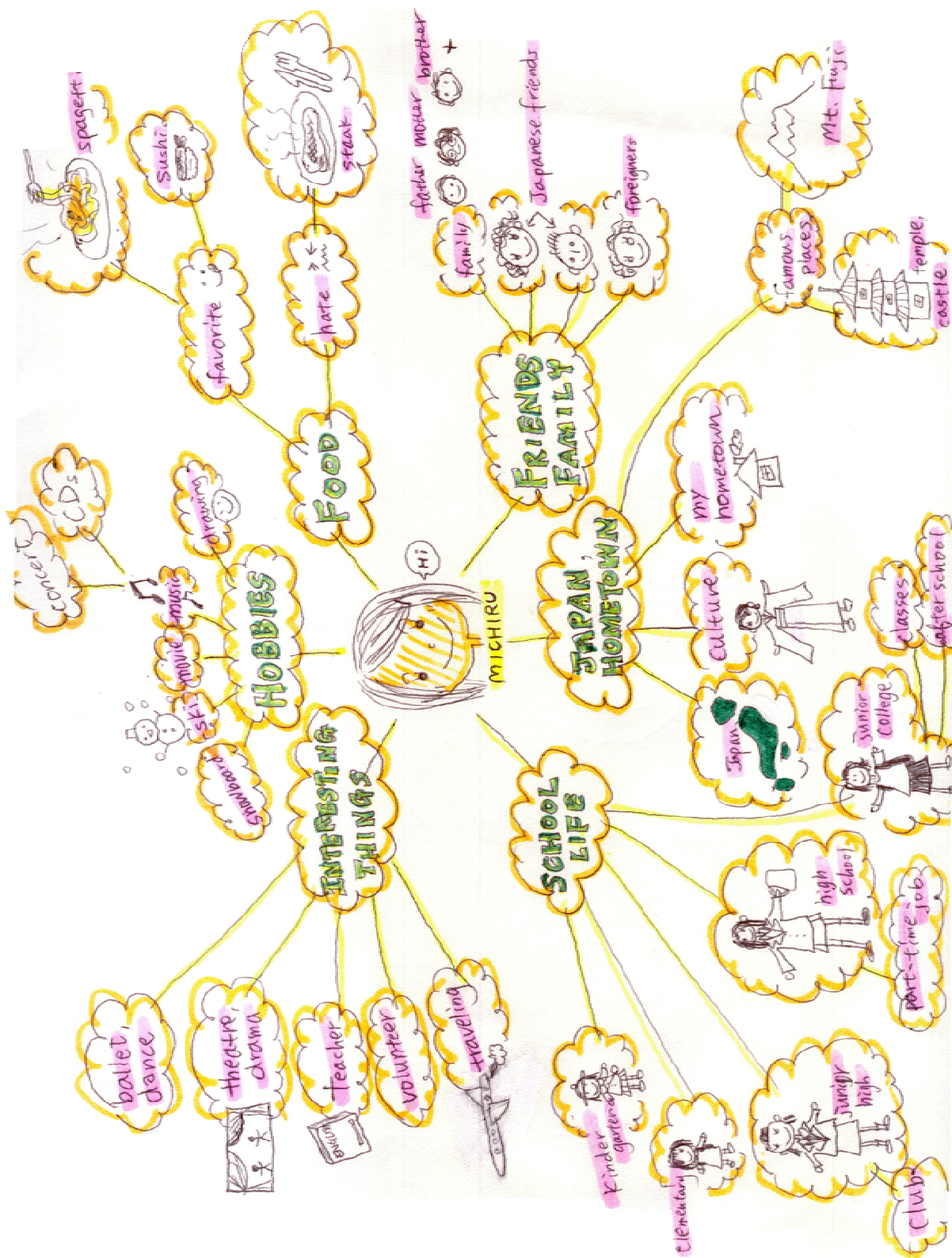
The most helpful part was...

Write a 2-3 word definition of_____

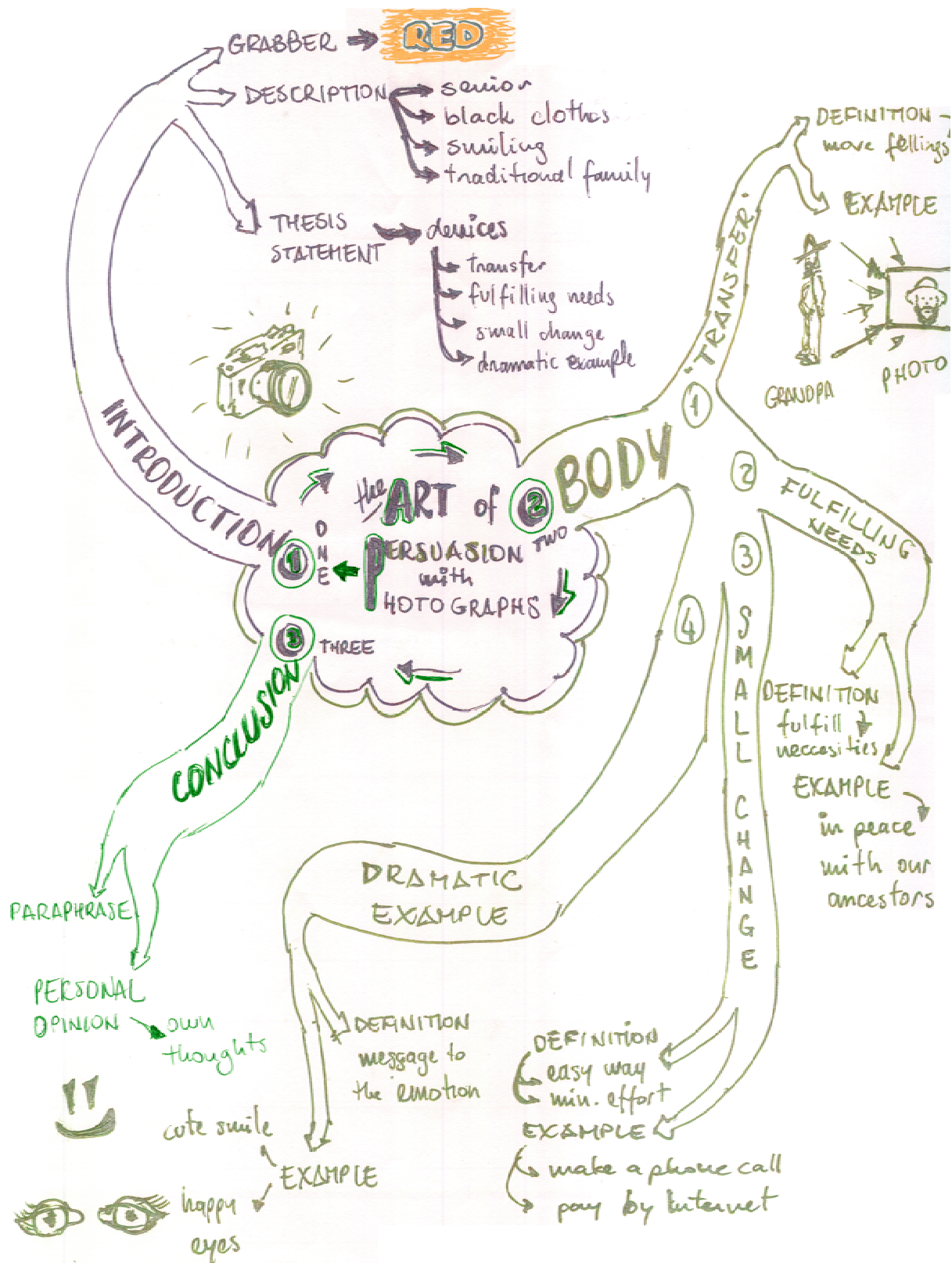
Write a one-word evaluation/opinion on _____

As a group member/ lab partner I am_____

Mind-Map – My Life



Mind- Map - an Essay of Analysis – looking at an advertisement



100 * New Idea Day 27

During the editing process, students underline any areas they have questions about in their own essay, with one color. Then they trade papers with their partner and do the same thing. With only 4 students * I was able to read over and mark questionable areas with a third color while the pair was discussing the other writing.

This gave ~~me~~ a good start to the editing process. Having students note their name and color at the page top was a good indicator to me of what they are noticing. This was a good thing. Paco puts more errors in than he corrects!!

Reference Page

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