

CURRENT ISSUES IN SECOND LANGUAGE WRITING**Chair: M.E. Brisk**

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This panel present three projects that demonstrate, from different perspectives, the integrated knowledge involved in the complex process of writing in a second language. The panel proposes ways to promote the linguistic and pragmatic sensitivity of second language learners, and thus to improve their writing abilities.

**TEACHING WRITING TO BILINGUAL LEARNERS:
USING SYSTEMIC FUNCTIONAL LINGUISTICS TO INFORM
CONTENT AND PEDAGOGY****M.E. Brisk**

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Research and the teaching of writing have evolved over time. From a focus on product where the expectation was that children had to be “corrected” until they achieved adult-like writing performance, to an emphasis on process where children are expected to experiment on their way to achieving adult-like proficiency. More recently, there has been an interest in genre “largely a response to changing views of discourse and of learning to write which incorporate better understandings of how language is structured to achieve social purposes in particular contexts of use” (Hyland, 2007, p. 148). The purpose of this presentation is to explain an approach to teaching writing to second language learners informed by Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL). The genres expected in academic writing will be delineated to demonstrate what needs to be taught. The approach to teaching is informed by the Teaching and Learning Cycle (Rothery, 1996).

References

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A PRAGMATIC APPROACH TO WRITING IN A SECOND LANGUAGE

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Writing, when viewed as a language skill used for communication, has much in common with both reading and speaking. We usually write so that someone else can read what we have written and make sense of the message or the idea we tried to transmit via the written text. In other words, most of the time we write "for a reader". This reader-based writing requires careful thinking, preparation and planning on the part of the writer – this is what writing courses need to train students to do in a second language, when they write.

Writing in a second language requires some basic knowledge in that language both in terms of grammar and vocabulary. But this knowledge is important in the bottom-up writing process while a more pragmatic approach should enable students to plan a text that is communicative and well-understood. Even in a second language it is the writer's obligation to produce a reader-based text.

The presentation will focus on the need to integrate language knowledge as well as pragmatics within the writing process that students engage in. One approach can be "reading as a model for writing" but students need to experience topic-choice and the translation of writing objectives into coherent texts at all levels of the second language course of study. The presentation will address some of the ways in which writing can be enhanced in the second language classroom.

**LANGUAGE THROUGH WRITING:
PROMOTING LANGUAGE AND LITERACY IN SECOND
LANGUAGE WRITING**

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Contextual testing is crucial in determining whether a certain construction has been “acquired” in terms of usage, that is, the ability to deploy these forms appropriately in discourse (Ravid, 2004). This presentation shows an approach to evaluating, teaching and promoting second language abilities through a written textual context. The approach relies on Berman and Slobin’s (1994) definition of a proficient speaker, as “being able to use linguistic forms to meet specific discursive needs” (p. 597). It considers morpho-syntax and literacy as two consecutive knowledge domains which compose second language knowledge. The presentation will introduce a model that maps out the learners’ capacity to attach the adequate grammatical constructions to the appropriate text, and put them all together in an accurate, organized and coherent way in writing. Intervention programs, based on the specific difficulties located, are shown to significantly improve the learners’ integrated proficiency and written abilities in the target language.

References:

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