

Writing Skills: Stages of Development - A Book Review

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Taking a comprehensive and multifaceted approach to writing growth, this book digs into the nature of writing development. Even though a significant amount of research has been done in writing development, the majority of these studies have been undertaken on specific populations or age cohorts. This research has also been undertaken from several theoretical perspectives, which is another benefit. As a result, there is a paucity of theories in writing development that can assist researchers and teachers in improving students' writing development in a comprehensive manner. This book aims to lay the groundwork for such a theory by connecting various perspectives on the development of writing skills. Beginning with the premise that writing development is an integrated component of learners' whole life experience rather than occurring in a specific context or set of circumstances, the writers proceed from there. Each section of the book is broken into three parts. All write the first portion of the authors as a communal effort. It provides an outline of the book's contents and the rationale for choosing a multidimensional approach in the understanding of writing development in the first chapter. The writers also propose a set of principles to define the complex nature of writing development across one's life span. The second section examines changes in writing and writing perceptions across time from various angles to understand better (e.g., cognitive, linguistic, socio-cultural). Finally, there is a discussion of how a fragmented understanding of writing can negatively impact educational curriculum and policymaking. The third section concludes with a concluding chapter in which the authors propose future study lines to investigate the interplay between several writing dimensions in greater depth.

Contents

As discussed throughout the chapters, writing growth is defined as a change in the way we use writing (e.g., in terms of writing abilities or purposes) resulting from a conscious attempt

to change. Because development takes place in the context of the learner's life, writing does not develop in isolation but rather in close connection with other types of development in the learner's environment. The following is the structure of the book according to this viewpoint.

Section 1: The Scope of the Project

This part is divided into two chapters. The first chapter provides a thorough examination of the multifaceted character of the writing development process. From a cognitive perspective, writing emerges from the learners' internal resources, whereas from a linguistic perspective, the emphasis is on the writer's handling of language resources and how they are combined. According to the social perspective, the utilisation of these resources occurs within the context of interpersonal relationships. Finally, the development of writing within cultures is mediated by historical and cultural processes. To conclude, from a historical perspective, Current educational policy and practice tend to ignore some of these views, resulting in descriptions of writing development that is both incomplete and inaccurate. The chapter thus contributes to the need to challenge policy and practice by advocating for a global concept of writing that brings together a variety of viewpoints.

Chapter 2 builds on the previously stated interactive and multidimensional perspective to produce a set of writing development principles applicable across various theoretical orientations and circumstances (see Chapter 1). These principles provide a complete description of the writing growth process, allowing instructors to guide students more effectively. Specifically, the first principle addresses writing as a social tool that brings people together as community members and that adapts in response to shifting social demands. The second principle concerns the complexity of writing development, which necessitates the coordination of numerous abilities and cognitive processes within the learner's mind to be accomplished. The third principle is concerned with the variety in the evolution of writing. Writing trajectories are anything but linear, and they differ both within and between individuals. According to this idea, the writing tools that writers employ are defined by social and historical developments. The fifth principle is concerned with the ways through which cognitive systems are changed in order for them to be utilised for writing purposes. The sixth principle is concerned with the interaction between writing development and other growth forms, such as speech or reading development. Finally, according to the

seventh principle, educators should use a diverse range of linguistic resources to simulate the production of meaningful written writings better. In conclusion, the eighth principle proposes a new school curriculum that considers the variability of children's writing growth. The ideal situation would be for these eight principles to guide and encourage educational change.

Section 2: Perspectives on the Development of Writing Across the Lifespan

This section is divided into eight sections. A full description of writing development in early childhood is presented in Chapter 3, founded on two premises: first, literacy acquisition begins very early in life; second, writing development may be researched long before infants employ standard written forms. 139 youngsters between the ages of 2 1/2 and 5 years old participated in the study, which included a cross-sectional analysis of their written work. According to the findings, different dimensions of writing progress through different stages of growth. In contrast to letter-sound correspondence, conventional directional patterns arise earlier in development, suggesting that grasping conventional writing direction is less difficult. Children may associate a picture with a vocal message as early as three years old, but it is not until they are approximately four or five years old that they can assign meaning to their printed marks. In addition, the author conducted a three-year longitudinal analysis of the writing progress of ten students, which is available online. Suppose the findings from both studies are taken together. In that case, they show that writing development follows a linear route between age groups, but it follows distinct trajectories within a single person. Rowe concludes the chapter by emphasising the importance of variability in writing development as a key topic in writing study.

The development of pupils' abilities to construct meaning through linguistic resources is the emphasis of Chapter Four. Schleppegrell and Christie present several texts created by K-12 English speakers to illustrate meaning-production throughout the school years. The writers rely on Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) as their underpinning theory when it comes to writing development. Theoretically, lexical complexity progresses from a rudimentary grammar in early childhood to a consolidated grammar of abstraction in late adolescence. They present four categories of meaning-development along with examples of language resources to promote their evolution: (a) objective expression of the writer's thinking; (b) controlled and sophisticated use of themes, understood as elements to place the clauses within

their context; (c) density of students' texts, which increases as the writer includes additional information to guide the reader (e.g., time, space, background, etc.); and (d) abstraction of meaning from the writer's thoughts. This chapter strongly emphasises the importance of the various topics taught in school, particularly mathematics. As children progress from elementary to secondary education, increased differentiation across courses increases. Each discipline has its own set of objectives and the need for specialised terminology. This specificity aids kids in developing a variety of language resources that may enable them to participate in a variety of social contexts in the future. The authors examine the ramifications of SFL towards the end of the chapter which follows. From the standpoint of research, SFL provides methods for determining which language resources writers employ to fulfil their communicative objectives. Teachers and policymakers can utilise this extensive description of writing development to design learning and assessment tools, which is particularly useful from an educational standpoint.

In Chapter 5, Berninger et al. investigate how developing writers' perspectives of writing vary throughout their writing careers. These impressions and writing difficulties are discussed with one another by the authors. The authors give two descriptive studies concerned with the writer's self and how it is influenced by his or her upbringing. First, typically developing children in Grades 1, 3, 5, and 7 recounted what writing was like for them in the first experiment. The findings revealed that, while students did not adapt their descriptions to the audience, they did include: (a) references to cognition or executive functions only in the upper elementary grades; (b) references to language or emotions that appeared earlier but became more complex over time; (c) references to the sensorimotor domain that decreased throughout schooling; and (d) references to specific writing skills (e.g., spelling) as well as the relationship between writing and cognition. Student perceptions of writing were examined in a second study, which included children with severe writing difficulties in the 4th through 9th grades who had received computerised writing training and were asked about their attitudes about writing. Despite their challenges with transcription, these aspiring writers claimed that they enjoyed their writing activities. They also emphasised the importance of student-teacher bonding in learning to write. Lastly, the authors suggest further investigation into the influence of the writing environment on students' perspectives and the use of numerous ways to assess these impressions in the future.

In Chapter 6, we understand adolescents' attitudes toward academic writing in secondary school. According to Campbell and Jeffery, such impressions are examined in terms of agency, defined as the ability to act as an active agent in writing. The authors analyse the interviews and writing samples of 63 sixth- through twelfth-grade students who participated in the National Study of Writing Instruction (NSWI). The researchers wanted to compare the perceptions of L1 greater achievers, L1 lesser achievers, and L2 students to find out how they differed. Students' opinions of writing at school, their confidence in their writing skills, and their comprehension of the purpose of writing can all be categorised into three categories based on the findings. Older pupils were more likely than younger students to offer positive opinions, for starters.

Furthermore, L1 authors reported more pleasant feelings than L2 writers consistently. For the second time, higher-achieving L1 students reported feeling more confident in their writing abilities than lower-achieving L2 and L1 students. However, this last group had the lowest level of self-confidence of all the groups. Third, higher-achieving L1 students appeared to have a better understanding of the fact that each discipline has a specific writing goal. However, L1 poor achievers and L2 writers, on the other hand, displayed a limited awareness of the various writing purposes across different fields. Finally, the authors emphasise the necessity of engaging students in meaningful writing projects that allow them to express their knowledge and their thoughts and experiences to a range of audiences towards the conclusion of the chapter.

Chapter 7 provides recommendations for increasing the visibility of writing in the school curriculum. Murphy and Smith use curricular diversity as a starting point to explain why writing receives differing levels of attention in different schools and classrooms across the country. The varied understandings of writing and techniques for teaching writing appear to impact the diversity of curricula. Therefore, the authors propose and demonstrate three game-changers for effective writing instruction: (a) collaborative writing to encourage knowledge-sharing, (b) new technologies to give proper scaffolding, and (c) activities to individualise each student's curriculum. In order for these methods to become a reality, it is necessary to invest in the professional development of educators. Teachers should be supplied with responses that are tailored to their individual needs. This can be accomplished through

chances for collaboration, for teachers to become researchers of their teaching techniques, and for teachers to write about their experiences. To close the chapter, the author emphasises the necessity of paying attention to what teachers have to say. In particular, the authors assert that educational problems must be addressed from the inside out, from the perspective of what is taking place in the classrooms.

Working adults' writing development is examined in Chapter 8, predicated on the premise that literacy and human development are inextricably intertwined. The phrase 'life-course development' emphasises the bidirectional relationship between changes in one's surroundings and changes in one's personality and development. Because of the social changes around human beings, individual literacy is portrayed as a result of these developments. The author investigates the evolution of adult writing skills through the analysis of interviews with 60 working people. A discussion of three major features is presented, each demonstrated with multiple examples. First, writing development is directly tied to the job and manifests itself as a product of the workplace to begin with. As a result, the way writing develops is dependent on the function that each individual plays at work. However, because roles are dynamic and partly defined by the corporate structure and the connection with other employees, they are a source of variation in the development of adult workplace writing. Second, historical events have an impact on the development of writing. Situations in society, culture, politics and the economy encourage the creation of new text kinds and the modification of existing ones. One illustration of this relationship is the widespread use of new technology, which, among other things, demonstrates the reciprocal relationship between adult writing growth and historical eras. In the third instance, individual dispositions impact one's growth. Dispositions are defined as personal views about how to make progress in life that are formed due to the experiences that a person has had. As a result, early life experiences impact the writing preferences of adults. Finally, the chapter proposes that, in light of what is now known about adult writing development, further investigation into how writing should be taught in schools be undertaken. If we focus just on student writing in our studies, we risk missing out on the dynamic viewpoint of writing growth.

By connecting writers with their writing community, Graham describes a model of writing that integrates both the cognitive and the social viewpoints in chapter 9. The first section is

devoted to the writing community, which is described as a collection of people who get together to pursue their common goals through writing. Written by an author who discusses the characteristics of a writing community and emphasises how they are interconnected. As a result of reciprocal influences between each individual, their writing community, and other communities, the final written product is presented as a result of the final written product. The second section focuses on the cognitive and psychological resources that authors employ to deal with inadequate processing skills, which constrain the quality of the written product produced. These include long-term memory resources acquired through experience, control mechanisms that allow one to self-regulate one's writing behaviour, the processes carried out to produce the final result, and physical and psychological modulators that influence writing. An example of how the writing community and writers collaborate is presented in the third part, which is quite thorough. According to the proposed model, writing is a two-way activity in which societal and individual components work together to shape the steps of the writing process. In the final section, the author discusses the mechanisms that aid in developing writing skills. He suggests two stages of development: a social level and an individual level of development. Several examples demonstrate how writing evolves within a writing community and within an individual's headspace. Each of the arguments addressed in the chapter contributes to a multifaceted understanding of writing.

It is proposed in Chapter 10 to conduct lifelong longitudinal research on the development of writing skills. As Bazerman explains, the need for such a study is justified by the notion that it will show how writing competence is obtained and, as a result, will assist educators in providing support to learners. In the first section of the chapter, the author discusses the characteristics of longitudinal studies in general and long-term studies in particular. Although studies from various domains are brought together, there is a strong emphasis on developmental psychology and how its principles can be applied to longitudinal studies on the development of writing skills. These studies, taken together, suggest that individuals' developmental paths differ significantly. A design for a long-term longitudinal study of writing is proposed in the second section of the chapter, followed by a discussion of the design. In this view, writing is a social tool whose evolution is synchronised with the advancement of society. According to this viewpoint, the author recommends that data collecting be comprehensive and begin as early in the process as is practical. Researchers will

be able to collect early attempts at communicating that may impact future writing development.

Furthermore, samples should be large enough to enable comparisons both within and between cohorts to be possible. Finally, the author advises that data should be collected using a variety of methodologies that take into account characteristics such as persons' geographic location, age, the writing necessary in their lives, and social developments. The chapter concludes with an outline of the data types required in the proposed study to address the issues raised throughout the chapter fully.

Section 3: Concluding Remarks

The book comes to a close with a final chapter that summarises the authors' common viewpoints and conclusions. There is broad agreement on the complexity and heterogeneity of writing development, which is seen as an individual path that is not determined by biological factors. The chapters are organised around three main research areas: aspects of writing development, concurrent forms of growth, and environmental variables that influence writing development (in that order). The authors contend that writing growth should be seen as a life resource that is moulded by one's trajectory rather than simply as an academic product and that it should be considered as such. Finally, the authors develop directions for teaching and studying writing based on their extensive expertise in the craft. The ongoing study will, in turn, shape these directions, allowing researchers, policymakers, and educators to collaborate toward a common goal: the long-term success of the writer by his or her identity.

Conclusion

The inevitable evolution of societies and the ensuing quick changes in theories, knowledge, and methodology unquestionably present a challenge to those who study the development of written language. Furthermore, traditional writing models (Alamargot & Chanquoy, 2001) tend to concentrate on a certain component of what makes writing, which is typically cognitive or contextual aspects. The upshot is that the majority of existing definitions of writing development are skewed, and information is dispersed among theoretical viewpoints, methodology, and research populations as a result (Bazerman, 2016). The authors of this

volume attempt to overcome this problem by providing a multidisciplinary lifespan perspective on writing development as a starting point for researching it.

The book serves as an excellent demonstration of bringing theory and practice together. While some chapters concentrate on the definition of writing and the process of writing development, others focus on its components and the variables that influence them; others either discuss the findings of empirical research into the process of writing development or provide specific clues and detailed guidance on how to carry out such research. The writers provide a rich selection of examples to illustrate both the theoretical and practical frameworks, allowing readers to comprehend better the content being presented. Considering the complementarity of theory and practice is especially beneficial when designing empirical studies on writing development. It establishes a bridge between the theoretical comprehension of topics and the practical use of processes and procedures in the workplace. So, the twin orientation of this book reacts first to the knowledge that must be acquired and then to the application of this knowledge. These are the three most significant contributions made by this book.

First and foremost, the book challenges the notion of writing as a straightforward process of converting spoken communication into written form. According to the comprehensive perspective offered in this book, writing development is more than just a means of communication in and of itself. The act of learning to write serves a variety of purposes that may go unrecognised if the act is only examined from a single point of view. Writing, for example, contributes to the development of one's personality and beliefs about oneself and others; it places each individual into a social group and strengthens the relationships within that group and between different communities; it leads to success and generates a sense of personal satisfaction, and it helps one to communicate effectively with others. To summarise, writing development equips individuals with various tools that they can use to deal with a variety of situations. Second, according to the volume, the writing development process extends beyond the agents of instruction. The vast bulk of writing research has been performed in schools and educational institutions. The majority of it is directed at instructors and students, with a small amount addressing curricular reforms. The authors of this book, on the other hand, take a more expansive approach. They believe that the development of writing

is society's responsibility as a whole. This point of view includes not only teachers and students but also policymakers, businesses concerned with the abilities of their employees, and members of any community where people are encouraged to pursue writing careers. Although this topic is made throughout the book, Chapter 8 provides a particularly strong illustration of writing development outside the classroom setting. According to the authors' point of view, writing is a cognitive resource that contributes to maintaining people's socio-economic well-being and well-being (Beddington et al., 2008). The writing was designated as one of the "essential skills necessary for employment, personal fulfilment and health, active and responsible citizenship, and social inclusion" by the European Union, and this designation was not in vain (Education Council, 2006, pp.13).

Third, the book urges readers to re-evaluate the design and implementation of writing interventions due to their experiences. During the last few decades, a substantial body of research has been undertaken on effective instructional approaches to enhance writing skills in students (see, for example, a meta-analysis by Graham, McKeown, Kiuahara, & Harris, 2012; Graham & Perin, 2007). This practice tends to be concerned with improving the writing output and process or the setting in which writing is created (for example, students' motivation and contextual characteristics). On the other hand, they fall short of addressing both issues at the same time. Additionally, writing treatments are generally evaluated among cohorts of students that share unique features with the interventionists (e.g., age, learning disabilities, socio-economic status). According to the multidimensional approach to writing development advocated in this book, writing interventions should be based on two fundamental principles.

First and foremost, writing development results from mutually reinforcing impacts between internal and external variables. Thus, writing interventions should target the cognitive, psychological, and social aspects. Second, writing education must be tailored to each student's unique characteristics. As a result, interventions should consider both between and within-subject variability. The model proposed by Graham in Chapter 9 provides a clear illustration of these two ideas, even though they are given throughout the entire book.

In conclusion, this volume provides new insights into comprehending writing development and how to put this understanding into practice. The authors present their views from various

angles, including scientific, pedagogical, and societal. Therefore, contributions are made not only by writing research and instruction but also to policy formulation and decision-making. Overall, this book established the foundation for re-designing writing curricula: educational policies and instructional practises should move away from an emphasis on standards and instead emphasise the development of unique learning paths.

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