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TEACHING COLLABORATIVE WRITING TO MEET THE NEEDS
OF THE JOB MARKET: A MODEL

A Thesis
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State University,
San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts
in
English

by
Denise Kruizenge-Muro
March 1999

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ABSTRACT

Studies show an increase in the collaborative writing done in business and industry. For example, in a 1981 survey of workplace writers, Lester Faigley reports that less than 30 percent of the individuals surveyed stated they have never collaborated (Anderson 50). And, in a study done five years later, Ede and Lunsford found that "87 percent of 520 professionals...wrote collaboratively at least some of the time" (Forman 236). Other surveys, "of those in the professions reveal that between 75 and 87 percent of respondents sometimes collaborate" in on-the-job writing. Yet research also shows "a real dichotomy between the way writing is taught and the way it is practiced" in real life situations (Dale 21). If one of the goals of teaching writing in the university is to meet the needs of demanding job markets, universities will need to explore more fully collaborative writing in the university. Thus, my study works to answer this question: How can collaborative writing more effectively be taught to meet the needs of the students seeking jobs in business and industry? I offer a model for a collaborative business-focused writing class as one answer to this question.

Chapter one defines and then discusses collaborative writing as it is practiced in business and industry by

focusing on the writing done at two corporations: (1) Exxon Corporation, as described by James Paradis, David Dobrin, and Richard Miller, and (2) General Electric Capital Mortgage Corporation, San Bernardino, California, from my first-hand participation as an employee.

Chapter two examines theories of collaborative writing, using the works of Anne Ruggles Gere, Kenneth A. Bruffee, James E. Porter, and others, to illustrate the numerous and conflicting ideas about how collaborative writing should be taught, as well as implications for preparing students to write on the job.

Chapter three, then, proposes a writing class that models its teaching of collaborative writing on that done by business writers. The model combines some of the practices exemplified in chapter one with the theories discussed in chapter two and shows how theories and practices can work together to better prepare students to collaborate on the job. This model's purpose is not to propose an all-inclusive model but to illustrate ways the collaborative writing taught in university classrooms may converge constructively with the collaborative writing students will produce as they move into the world of business and industry.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

What is the purpose of a college education? Statistics show that between 1998 and 2007 "college enrollment is projected to increase at an average annual rate of 1.3 percent" (National Center for Education Statistics 1). This means that college enrollment is expected to increase "to 15.6 million by the year 2007" (2). But why are all these people going to college? Is it, as some claim, to learn a list of "terms and information" that will make them culturally literate (Elbow 17)? Or are people flocking to college so that they can gain "the ability to interpret, question, and evaluate information" in order to become better citizens and members of a democracy (32)? Or, do people attend college to learn "to think both logically and creatively and...to work cooperatively in groups," for example, to acquire skills that are "highly valued in business and industry at the present time" (37)?

Whatever our beliefs about the purpose of a college education, or our speculations about the intentions of the 15.6 million future college graduates, the fact is that most students graduating from colleges and universities will be heading to work in diverse fields. Entering the workforce

students will be more likely to succeed if they can actively effectively participate in diverse and in competition with more experienced workers, today's and ever-changing business environments. Therefore, argue many business people and educators, one way colleges and universities can contribute to the success of their graduates is to teach them these valuable thinking and communication skills and, very specifically, to teach them how to write collaboratively.

Business Writing

Studies show an increase in the collaborative writing done in business and industry. For example, in a 1981 survey of workplace writers, Lester Faigley reported that less than 30 percent of the individuals surveyed stated they never collaborated (Anderson 50). And, in a study done five years later, Ede and Lunsford found that "87 percent of 520 professionals...wrote collaboratively at least some of the time" (Forman 236). Yet research also shows us that currently, "there is a real dichotomy between the way writing is taught and the way it is practiced" in real life situations (Dale 21). As a teacher of future business writers, I am interested in helping students bridge the gap between the university and the workplace.

Because business writing and lower-division college writing are currently quite different undertakings, success in one does not necessarily mean success in the other. This gap leaves students at a distinct disadvantage when they enter the workforce. However, the research cited above suggests that collaborative writing may be the site where the gap between school writing and workplace writing can be bridged. Therefore, this study will try to determine how collaborative writing can be used more effectively to meet the needs of students seeking jobs in business and industry and thus create that important bridge.

Before I begin, I need to provide definitions for such terms as "business writing" and "collaborative writing." For the purpose of this study, "business writing" will be defined as any on-the-job writing activity ranging from memos and letters to formal reports, press releases, proposals, and presentations. In other words, "business writing" encompasses all of the writing done by professionals on the job for job-related purposes.

Defining "collaborative writing" is much more complicated. In the business world, as in the field of composition, the term "collaborative writing" can have any one of a number of definitions. In fact, most studies on collaborative writing use the word "collaboration" as if everyone knows what it means. But there are many different,

often conflicting, ideas and assumptions about the term that make it not so easily understood. Based on both the research I have done and on my own experience with collaborative writing, I will narrow the broader definition of "collaborative writing" to writing done by a group of two or more writers producing a single text. This group of writers may or may not have generated the idea themselves, yet they are planning, drafting, writing, and revising together to create a single document. Further, I will limit my study to writers working face to face. The writers can see each other and interact with one another at the time of text production. I offer a narrower definition of "collaborative writing" because it best describes the writing I have seen done on the job and it best fits the model that I am proposing.

The collaborative group may or may not have generated the idea about which they write. As is common in the business world, the ideas for written work, as the ideas for other jobs, often come from a higher managerial authority. Anne Ruggles Gere's descriptions of non-autonomous, semi-autonomous, and autonomous groups may be helpful here to further describe the type of group to which I refer. Autonomous groups are self-formed and self-directed; they are groups of highly skilled writers and are usually not found in classrooms or workplaces. One example of an

autonomous writing group might be a literary society whose members collaborate to improve their writing, to receive feedback on their work, and to produce polished pieces for publication. Semi-autonomous and non-autonomous groups are the types usually found in the classroom and the workplace (Gere 100-101). A non-autonomous group has no control over what or how they write. They are directed by others in every facet of the writing process.

Semi-autonomous groups are most similar to the type found both in the collaborative classroom and in the workplace. In the classroom, the teacher retains authority to give assignments and grade; in the workplace, the supervisor or manager retains authority over such aspects of writing as generating ideas, editing, and final approval of publishing or distributing. However, semi-autonomous groups have more control over their writing process than do members of non-autonomous groups. Semi-autonomous groups have the freedom to delegate responsibilities as the members see fit and to choose the words they use and how to use them. For example, a semi-autonomous group in the workplace may receive a project from a supervisor who asks the group to write a memo to all employees detailing a new policy. It is then up to the group to decide how to delegate such tasks as researching the new policy, chairing each meeting, recording the activities in the form of meeting minutes, writing

drafts, and editing. It is also up to the group to decide which pieces of information about the new policy belong in the memo, how that information should be organized within the memo, what tone is most appropriate, and what layout looks most attractive. Thus, when I speak of collaborative writing groups both on the job and in the classroom, it is these semi-autonomous groups to which I refer.

I have chosen two corporations--Exxon ITD and General Electric Capital Mortgage Corporation, Incorporated(GECMSI)-for this study. Yet I am aware that I cannot generalize these two corporations to corporations everywhere. Differing corporate cultures make that impossible. Nor can I say that the collaborative writing done at Exxon ITD and at GECMSI is the only collaborative writing that is done, for I have purposely excluded other corporations, correspondence between corporations, and electronic mail. However, I believe I can say that the collaborative writing described here provides good examples of the range of diverse tasks students will be doing when they begin working in their chosen fields. Additionally, as examples, both corporations allow me to highlight the diverse cultures and writing tasks faced by students entering the workforce. And, as examples, both corporations allow me to talk about collaboration with an eye toward transferring of skills from one setting to another. With this in mind, I will examine

two corporations I have chosen for this very preliminary study of collaborative business writing.

Collaborative Writing at General Electric and Exxon:
An Overview

The two corporations I will be examining for this portion of my study are General Electric Capital Mortgage Services, Incorporated, and Exxon ITD. GECMSI, located in San Bernardino, California, is GE's only mortgage servicing branch on the West Coast. During the mid-1990s, my term of employment, this branch employed approximately 450 people and housed the following departments: a customer service department that fielded most calls from mortgagors regarding their home loans; an investor reporting department, which handled reporting to Fannie Mae, Freddie Mac, HUD, and various minor investors; tax and insurance departments; and a foreclosure department that was responsible for the servicing of loans from their first day of delinquency through the time the homes were either sold back to the investor or sold on the open market.

The information on Exxon ITD is drawn from a study conducted by James Paradis and David Dobrin, who spent a week "observing the writing activities of 33 engineers and scientists" employed by the Intermediates Technology

Division (ITD) of Exxon Chemicals Company in Baton Rouge, Louisiana (Paradis et al. 282). The Intermediates Technology Division is a research and development division responsible for "conducting process and product research for the larger organization" (282). The members of the ITD participated in such tasks as developing new products; "provid[ing] marketing support for technical products"; and creating such documents as progress reports, patent applications, and operations manuals (282, 291).

Paradis and Dobrin focus their study on the activities of "writing and editing one's own documents" and "editing and reviewing the...documents of others," as completed by employees in the three organizational levels of the company: staff (junior and senior engineers and scientists), supervisors, and managers.

Both GECMSI and Exxon ITD are similar in that both have a similar corporate structure. This structure places those who do the most daily writing of crucial documents at the bottom of the corporate hierarchy and those who do the least daily writing of crucial documents at the top. Both corporations are also diverse with regards to race, age, and gender. The collaborative groups at both corporations, as I will discuss in more detail shortly, are both semi-autonomous and are made up of individuals who, while they do a good deal of individual writing as part of their jobs,

also collaborate quite often while writing documents at work.

Collaborative Writing: My Personal Experience

My introduction to business writing began as a crash course. I entered the business world in 1993 at the height of the refinance boom in the mortgage industry. From the beginning, I was required to write on the job. At first, I wrote only memos to my supervisor or notes to go in files. However, as I began to move up within the company, I began to write more often. Sometimes, I spent a day or even two days of my work week documenting case notes in the computer and writing letters to mortgagors or, later, to HUD field offices and outside contractors. I also did committee work that involved significant amounts of writing. It was here, at GECMSI, where I participated in the kind of collaborative writing I have defined here

One specific example of a collaborative writing session in which I participated was with a committee that was responsible for setting up an employee rewards and recognition program for our worksite. The committee members came from several departments, and we all had different ideas about the program and what we wanted it to accomplish. We were assigned by the vice president of our department--

the foreclosure department--to write an article for the company newsletter introducing the new program to our site and the other sites around the world. We also were assigned to write instructions to the department managers who wished to nominate employees for the program. The article was to be one-half of a letter-sized page, approximately two to three paragraphs, so that there would be room for both the description of the new program and the graphics we wanted to include.

The collaborative writing session began with seven of us seated around the conference table in the boardroom. The room was well lit and the table large enough to accommodate us and our materials. Our first task was to elect one person to the job of secretary; she was the one who transcribed what we discussed and later typed up our final draft and presented it to the vice president. Using notes from previous meetings and suggestions from the vice president, we began the session by brainstorming. The entire process lasted one hour during which we wrote, sometimes on paper and sometimes on the board at the front of the room. We also spent a good deal of time discussing the article and what we wanted it to accomplish. There was a lot of debate over the exact purpose of the article and we frequently stopped writing to ask ourselves questions and clarify our purpose. We negotiated word choice, sentence

arrangement, and font size. We read the article often, both aloud and silently, rearranging sentences and paragraphs numerous times, and finally we produced a finished product.

While writing this short article, each one of us attempted to make our ideas heard and respected enough to be put down on paper. There was much verbal debate going on between us as portions of the text were being written down, other portions being edited, and still others invented. For me, the process was exciting. I enjoyed hearing what others had to say and how they chose to say it. I found the constant talking to be not a hindrance but a help. And, upon reflection, I was rather surprised at how fluid the whole process was: it was the epitome of all I had been taught about writing process and the circular nature of text production.

The way the seven of us conducted our collaborative writing session was a reflection of text production throughout the company on the lower staff level. I specify lower staff level as Band 1 through 3 employees--including all clerks, collectors, foreclosure representatives, administrative assistants, and floor supervisors--for I was not privy to the writing done by upper management. Like everyone in my department, I passed my written documents to others for review; and they often passed theirs to me. My supervisor often had us read over her letters and memos, and

I collaborated frequently with others outside my immediate department on many different types of written texts.

Although I had no special training in writing collaboratively, this collaborative writing session was successful. Looking back on this experience, two things stand out. First, the semi-autonomous nature of our group is now evident to me. We were given a task by a member of upper management and were told to show him our finished product. There was little involvement in the writing process from anyone outside our collaborative group; almost the entire process took place behind closed doors. And second, the negotiation of everything from concepts and purpose to commas and capital letters occurred simultaneously. This process stands in striking contrast to the way writing teachers and textbooks often teach writing--brainstorm, prewrite, write, revise--as if these tasks happen in this order and only in this order. I believe that the freedom our group had to make most decisions about the text, plus the active negotiation about those decisions, combined to make our group's collaboration a success.

Collaborative Writing at General Electric and Exxon:
Revisited

Writing and writing-related activities at Exxon ITD were both diverse and time consuming. Staff members wrote such varying documents as project proposals, progress reports, and research reports--the kinds of core documents rated by employees as very important to the overall functioning and productivity of the company (Paradis et. al 291). Supervisors wrote the same kinds of core documents as lower level staff members, but they also "wrote administrative memoranda" and participated heavily in the document cycling process, which I will describe in more detail later. Managers spent far less time engaged in preparing core documents and instead spent most of their time writing administrative memoranda, "reporting to upper management in ITD process toward Exxon R & D objectives," and generally "over[seeing] the production of documents in the broadest terms" (285-286). In other words, staff members wrote most of the core documents necessary for the day-to-day functioning of the company, supervisors divided their time between writing core documents and supervising the work of the staff members, and managers, quite far removed from the day-to-day writing being done, oversaw all of the various projects and viewed only finished products.

At Exxon ITD, writing and writing-related activities took up a great deal of the ITD employees' time. Supervisors, who had by far the toughest and most diverse tasks, spent up to fifty percent of their total job time engaged in some form of writing or editing activity (284). And staff members spent sixty-six percent of their total writing-related job time writing the core documents detailed above (writing here does not include editing) (Paradis et. al 285).

Staff members' writing activities were usually completed individually, for the staff members at Exxon preferred not to collaborate. Yet "[e]ach person at ITD operated in association with a small network of people," a collaborative group, who contributed to the written work of the individual in various ways, including promoting the individual's ideas and projects and providing leads for current projects. Despite the fact that staff members preferred to draft alone, they did collaborate. The most common form of collaboration was what Paradis and Dobrin call document cycling. This process proceeded as follows:

A document was assigned to an employee.... Usually, but not always, the supervisor was the initiator of this process....At various stages of writing, staff would

pass the document on to a supervisor, who reviewed the document and then called for certain revisions (294).

This cycle of writing and revision could be repeated as many as six times. Yet with each revision, the document's scope was refined, the language was made more clear and technically correct, and the organization became more focused (294). The document came to represent the goals and language of Exxon ITD rather than the goals and language of any one individual. Such documents could not be produced alone; junior staff members recognized this and, despite the tensions the cycling process often produced, came to appreciate the process.

The writing of a technical document in the manner described above was frustrating to many of the staff members. Paradis and Dobrin report that during "a group lunch session...with younger staff, several thought the [document cycling] process arbitrary...painful...and even mystifying" (294). These writers seemed to feel this way about the collaboration process because the kind of writing they were being asked to perform at Exxon ITD was quite different from the writing they had done in school. In fact, Paradis and Dobrin report that there was a three- to four-year socialization time during which new hires had to become socialized into Exxon's work environment and to learn

how to write within Exxon's corporate culture. This process was often a sink or swim initiation with frightening consequences. As one staff scientist said, "New people tend to get pegged in their first two years in the basis of their documents for the management track or for horizontal movement" (Paradis et al. 297-298).

Paradis and Dobrin claim that the problems experienced by the younger staff members stem from the fact that university writing classes, with activities such as peer editing and revision, lead students to believe that the "quality of writing *effort* counts" (302). In an industrial research and development organization, however, "results and how they promote established goals" count regardless of proof of effort (301). And with opportunities for promotion riding on one's documents, it is no wonder that junior staff members were frustrated by collaborating. They could not see how collaborating could improve their individual or group writing.

While I did not experience frustration with the collaboration process during my time at GECMSI, I, like Exxon's junior staff members, was not prepared by my college writing classes to write on the job. In fact, the two activities seemed like just that: two separate activities with no relation to each other whatsoever. The thought never crossed my mind, while writing at work, that I could

have or should have learned business writing at school. Conversely, work did not seem to be one of the goals of going to school. However, I believe that I was naive, that my professors did not make the college-workplace intersection explicit, and that, along with an increasing number of college students, entering the workforce prepared *is* one of the goals of going to college. In chapter two, therefore, I will explore the theories that lie behind what teachers today are doing to prepare students for their roles in the business world.

CHAPTER TWO

Process Theory: A Revolution in Writing

The history of the process movement is important to the rise in interest in collaborative writing. Prior to the 1960s, university English classes looked quite different from those we know today. Then, the elite--upper and upper-middle class white men--enjoyed higher education in far greater numbers than any other group. Women, minorities, and lower class men were much less well represented in college classrooms. The studies in which these largely elite students engaged were also much different than those today. Grammar exercises and rhetorical modes were the focus of instruction, and writing was usually done outside the classroom. Instructors saw only the finished written product and did not concern themselves with how the product came into existence. However, widespread discontent with the status quo came to a head in the '60s, leading to a rise of such movements as the feminist and civil rights movements that dramatically affected all facets of society.

With the passage of the Civil Rights Acts of 1964 and 1968, and as the Vietnam War was drawing to a close, colleges and universities began to mirror the discontent that had so characterized the sixties ("Civil Rights Acts"

8). "Toward the end of the sixties and largely in response to the protests of that decade, many four-year colleges began admitting students who were not by traditional standards ready for college" (Shaughnessy 1). Schools during this period were flooded with students for whom the status quo was not working. And nowhere was this more obvious than in English classes where Johnny and Janie couldn't write, where they spoke different dialects (or languages) outside of school, and where they struggled to write the daily or weekly themes required under pre-process curricula. It soon became apparent that educators needed to rethink the way they viewed students, teaching, and writing; this rethinking came in the form of the process movement in composition studies. Today, the process movement is marked by several features that distinguish it from earlier movements, among them: (1) a focus not on the finished written product produced by a writer but on the road, or process, traveled by that writer to get to the product, (2) a shift in classroom authority and responsibility away from the teacher and towards the students, and (3) a belief that writing is a social process and students learn to write by writing with and for others.

Process theory comes into the composition classroom somewhat later than process writing. In her article "Toward a Theory of Composition," Lil Brannon says that

Janet Emig's 1971 study entitled *The Composing Process of Twelfth Graders* generated interest in and a concern for "the general principles that underlie composing and...the nature and value of composing" (Brannon 8). In other words, Emig's study opened up the idea of a theory of process writing, and since then, composition researchers and teachers have attempted "to bring theory to bear on classroom practice" (Brannon 8).

Process writing theory, one of many competing practices deployed by practitioners in the field of composition, is not one single entity as, say, the Theory of Relativity might be considered, but is instead an umbrella under which many different and often conflicting theories and practices are grouped. Indeed, up until quite recently, as Brannon explains, composition itself was considered not so much a field as a group of people who possessed "a shared interest" in writers writing while at the same time retaining "conflicting theoretical commitments" in other disciplines (6).

Although I could extend this discussion of the different "sub-theories" and the often conflicting practices that all call themselves process theory or process methods for teaching writing, I would like instead to focus on several areas of the process movement that I think clearly show the connection between collaborative learning

and the growing interest in composing processes: the rise in interest in collaborative writing.

Theories of Collaborative Writing

Collaborative writing, itself a subset of the larger concept of collaborative learning, grows out of an interest in composing processes and shares many of process writing's features. Collaborative writing operates under several premises:

1. A belief in decentering the classroom by making students and student work, rather than the teacher and the teacher's work, the focus of the classroom.
2. A belief that consensus is a necessary goal of collaborative groups.
3. A belief that assignment design is crucial to the success of the collaborative writing project.
4. A belief that writers work best when they interact with other writers and pool their resources.

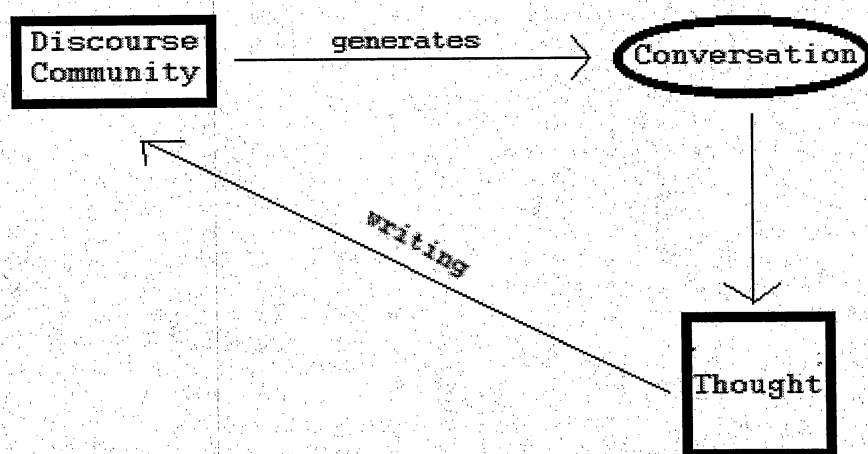
Those who teach by these premises can trace their roots to Kenneth A. Bruffee working in the late 1970s and early 1980s. In his landmark article "Collaborative Learning and the Conversation of Mankind," Bruffee quotes Michael

Oakeshott's "The Voice of Poetry in the Conversation of Mankind":

We are the inheritors...of a conversation, begun in the primeval forests.... It is a conversation which goes on both in public and within each of ourselves.. ..Education...is an initiation into the skill and partnership of this conversation (Bruffee 638).

The portion of this never-ending conversation that takes place inside of our heads, Bruffee says, "is what we call reflective thought": "reflective thought is public or social conversation internalized" (639). It follows, then, that we learn to think like those with whom we associate. If we want to think in new or different ways, then we need to join groups--or discourse communities--who think in the same ways we want to think. As we engage in public conversation using the group's language, we will then be able to participate in the same conversations internally. For example, if I want to be a coin collector, I must learn to think like a coin collector. According to Bruffee, I must first engage in conversations with other coin collectors about the kinds of things coin collectors discuss: Morgan Dollars, proof sets, mint condition. Only when I have done this will I be able to think like a coin collector and carry on such conversations in my head.

But what about writing? Suppose I want to publish an article in The Coin Dealer newsletter. Where does the writing process fit in to the process of learning to think like a coin collector? A diagram here will help illustrate writing's connection to speech and reflective thought.



"Writing," Bruffee says, "is at once two steps away from conversation and a return to conversation" (641). Writing is "internalized social talk made public and social again" (641). Hence, writing cannot be known without conversation and thought. Conversation, therefore, must be as much a part of the learning process as reading and writing. In the classroom, teachers must organize student groups in such a way that they have the opportunity to speak

with each other in a focused and meaningful way and to negotiate meaning with others in the group. In other words, teachers must help students to form classroom discourse communities in which students can speak with their peers in a shared language, termed by Richard Rorty "normal discourse"; negotiate meaning within that discourse community; and reach a meaning which is approved of by the group: a consensus.

Using Bruffee's discussion of Rorty as a springboard, Trimbur says that the business norm is not consensus as agreement but consensus as dissensus. Using Rorty's definition of normal discourse (that which maintains knowledge) and abnormal discourse (that which generates knowledge), Trimbur says that consensus is not a method of brainwashing students, nor is it a way to suppress their individuality or to force them to conform. On the contrary, consensus allows individuals to "realize their own power to take control of their situation" (Trimbur 441). Because consensus works only as individuals take responsibility for their opinions and beliefs, consensus cannot be understood without taking all individual voices into consideration. There cannot be consensus without dissensus, just as there cannot be normal discourse without abnormal discourse: both must exist in order for either to exist.

This means that both normal and abnormal discourse are a necessary part of conversation. For instance, in business meetings and conversations among friends and colleagues, the consensus that usually is reached includes some agreements to disagree and to live and work with these disagreements. *This*, Trimbur says, is the kind of consensus we need to ask our students to strive for in collaborative writing because it is *this* kind of consensus that business people and professionals reach in their daily work. Consensus, in other words, must be taught as "an oppositional...[practice] that challenges" business as usual (Trimbur 451).

A Business View of Collaboration

Bruffee's and Trimbur's theories have influenced the field of composition, to be sure. But they have also influenced business writers and business writing theorists as well. James E. Porter's essay "Ideology and Collaboration in the Classroom and in the Corporation" builds upon Trimbur's notion of dissensus by introducing the concept of ideology and its influence on dissensus. Ideology, generally speaking, is a set of beliefs about how the world works and how and why things exist in the world. "Considered from the perspective of rhetoric, ideology

provides the language to define the subject (the self)...and the relation" of the self to all other things in the world (Porter 18). "Ideology," Porter concludes, "is thus inscribed in language practices" (18).

Quoting Trimbur, Porter continues "[c]ollaboration itself is ideological...because it involves a group organizing itself to produce common work" (18). Thus, collaboration revolves around groups and group dynamics are influenced by ideology or the beliefs of the group members. These beliefs shape the way group members react to one another and influence the value the members place on the opinions and contributions of other members. Using Bruffee's and Rorty's language, ideology determines which voices count as normal discourse and which voices count as abnormal discourse. Ideology also influences how each group member will react to either the maintaining of current knowledge (through normal discourse) or the creating of new knowledge (through abnormal discourse).

Like Trimbur, Porter believes that the successful collaborative group is one that works with dissensus by "recognizing, [and] perhaps even valuing" the presence of differing--or conflicting--ideologies (Porter 22). Like Trimbur, Porter encourages teachers to embrace rather than avoid differing ideologies so as to prepare student writers

to recognize and deal with them when they enter the workplace.

In sum, then, Bruffee says that reflective thought is public conversation internalized. If people want to change the way they think--as most people entering college do--then they must enter into groups that think and speak the way they want to think and speak. The college business writing classroom thus becomes a transitional discourse community between a person's pre-college world and the new world of the workplace they hope to enter. In this transitional discourse community, teachers must give the students focused tasks that allow the students to make meaning with their peers. This group meaning-making is called the reaching of a consensus through dissensus.

Though some critics of collaborative writing worry about how reaching a consensus may affect students' individuality, Trimbur says that consensus, as he has defined it, does not rob students of their individuality. Additionally, Trimbur says, teachers do not have to change the way they teach collaborative writing to avoid consensus. They need only change their definition of consensus so that consensus is not thought of as brainwashing or business as usual but is instead an agreement to disagree and to respect individual voices and their contributions to the group.

Building upon these ideas, Porter says that it is ideology that influences group dynamics by influencing individual beliefs and language practices. Agreeing with Trimbur, Porter says that dissensus is the norm in business and should be the norm in the business writing classroom. Thus, business writing teachers should continue to require students to collaborate as a way to help accustom students to dissensus and to prepare them to work with it in the business world.

What Does it Mean to Teach Collaborative Writing?

How, then, do these theories help teachers understand what it means to teach collaborative writing? First, teaching writing collaboratively starts with a focus on students. This may be difficult for some teachers who believe, however subconsciously, in Paulo Freire's description of the "banking concept" of learning, believing that it is their duty to transfer knowledge, as one would transfer funds, from the teacher's full head to the student's empty one. Shifting attention away from oneself can be difficult; allowing students to learn by discovery, through problem-posing that includes trial and error, is even more difficult. However, students and their work must be the focus of the collaborative writing class.

Next, teaching writing collaboratively requires a belief in negotiation and consensus. Without the need for negotiation--required by a well-planned assignment--there can be no collaborative writing.

And finally, teaching collaborative writing means a desire to see students taking charge of their learning, interacting with one another as they struggle to make meaning within their classroom discourse communities.

Therefore, if one of the goals of college writing is to prepare students for workplace writing, and if at least some business writing is collaborative, and if the characteristics of a collaborative class include a decentered atmosphere, a complex assignment, and a search for consensus, then what would such a class look like? In chapter three, I will explore the transfer of collaborative theory into business classroom practice.

CHAPTER THREE

In this final chapter, I bring together composition theory, workplace practice, and classroom pedagogy by proposing a writing class that models its teaching of collaborative writing on that done by business writers. My purpose here is not to propose an all-inclusive model but to illustrate ways the collaborative writing taught in university classrooms might converge constructively with the collaborative writing students will do as they move into the worlds of business and industry. I conclude with a critique of a pilot of this proposed model.

The Model

My context for this model is Chaffey Community College, located in Rancho Cucamonga, California. Chaffey College is a small state-funded school that specializes in one- and two-year certificate programs and vocational training, an educational/vocational track selected by many California high school graduates. Classes at Chaffey Community College vary widely from aeronautics to keyboarding, hazardous waste management to French, and real estate to chemistry. Advanced Business Writing (BW II), the model class, is to be offered through the Department of Business and Office

Technologies (BUSOT). BW II is an alternative to English 102 or other second-semester, lower-division university writing classes. However, the class is offered through the Business Department rather than through the English Department so that students with similar goals and experiences can associate with one another in a setting that is at once classroom and workroom.

Because the class is offered through the BUSOT, most of the students enrolled in the class, like those enrolled in other classes offered in this department, are in one-year certificate programs such as Certified X-ray Technician or Certified Professional Secretary. Few are planning to earn two-year Associate's degrees, and fewer still are planning to transfer to four-year universities to earn Bachelor's degrees. Although the students' career goals vary widely, their primary reason for enrolling in the class is the same: job training. Therefore, the class focuses on workplace writing.

What does writing appropriately for work mean? The question is difficult, yet it is one that needs an answer. Barbara Couture and her associates at Wayne State University in Detroit, Michigan, discovered, while building a business writing program, that successful business writers must possess specific skills. Some of those skills, such as the ability to analyze readers and purposes and to gather

information from non-library sources, could be said to be common to all successful writers, business or otherwise (Couture et al., 414-415). However, certain other skills make the business writer's job different from the jobs other writers perform. Skills such as "developing a professional style," also called a "blunt and no-nonsense" style, and an ability to adapt quickly to specific writing constraints make business writing different from other types of writing (Couture et al., 413-415).

In addition to the differences Couture notes, I observed several others during the four years in which I wrote on the job. First, business writers use discourse-specific tones, styles, and formats. For example, business writers see a friendly, conversational tone as most appropriate to business writing. This tone is achieved through the use of contractions (I'm, you're); the substitution of smaller words for larger, perhaps more difficult to understand words (substituting "check" for "monitor" or "use" for "utilize" for instance); and the use of "you and "your" instead of "I" or "we" to emphasize reader benefits (Guffey 3).

Business writers also write for specific business purposes. In general, business writers write to stimulate immediate action in their readers. In contrast, the writing done in most college classes is done to tell a story, to

argue a point, or to interpret the writing of others. Although I have not discovered any studies on these aspects of business writing, Couture's observations coupled with my own observations that business writing requires collaboration and is often done on tight deadlines lead me to conclude that business writing is its own genre, different from other types of writing. It is on this premise, and on the research discussed in chapter two, that the following course description and assignment sequence are built.

The Articles and Assignments

The textbook used in this model class is Mary Ellen Guffey's Essentials of Business Communication, fourth edition. It is a practical how-to book that outlines the basic methods of business text organization and then teaches students how to use those methods when writing various types of memoranda and letters. I chose this text over other, perhaps more theory-oriented, texts for several reasons. First, the book is written in a style and presented in a format that is familiar to business writers. The "blunt and no-nonsense" language of the text models for students the language appropriate for work. Additionally, the format

is eye-catching, and the advice offered is practical: from one business person to another.

Second, I chose this text because the cases are excellent. They are modern, the situations they present are complex, and they accurately represent real situations business writers encounter daily.

Third, the text offers world wide web and Internet links to sites that can provide students with valuable resources not just for the work they do in the class but also for the work they do on the job or in their personal lives. For example, at the end of chapter three, the text offers a world wide web address to a site that has information on business ethics, and chapter seven offers a world wide web address for the `lectric Law Library, a site that offers free legal advise on a variety of topics. Both links are intended to help students complete the cases, but these sites are also valuable resources in other respects.

Finally, I chose Essentials of Business Communication because the book has a grammar and mechanics handbook at the end, in essence providing students two books for the price of one.

Despite the text's benefits, however, it is problematic. Its accompanying instructor's manual and materials often invite students to complete their work individually rather than in groups and often encourage

instructors to assign students to memorize facts that can then be assessed by the multiple choice or fill-in-the-blank tests included in the instructor's manual, a pedagogy that is incompatible with the composition theory outlined in chapter two. Thus, this model uses the textbook as a starting point for lessons that then allow students to move back and forth between the text and outside materials, using the concepts in the text to write about the articles and using the articles as examples of the concepts in the text. The model class' pedagogy is more compatible with the composition theory presented in chapter two, for this pedagogy gives students a broader application and audience for their writing: students write to real world situations and to a known audience of their peers. The text gives group members a common knowledge base from which to begin the negotiation required by collaboration.

In addition to the textbook, I have selected four articles that the students will read as part of the collaborative assignment sequence presented here. The first article, "A View From the East," was written by Boston Globe journalist Tom Ashbrook upon his return to America after more than ten years living and traveling in Japan and the Far East. Ashbrook coins the term "overripe" to describe an America past its prime, lazy, and content to live on credit. Ashbrook compares Japan with America in

many areas including industry, education, and economy, and contrasts the personal characteristics of Americans to Japanese, saying finally that America has lost its cutting edge in the world. Ashbrook's tone is one of sadness, yet he offers a glimmer of hope at the end. This article is easy to read and interesting in the way Ashbrook interweaves facts in with personal commentary. This article is the first in this sequence because it is quite accessible and will introduce students to the subject matter of this unit.

The next two articles offer opposing viewpoints on Japan's trade practices with the U.S. The second article, by Fred Barnes, "Japan's Trade Practices With the U.S. Are Unfair," takes an anti-Japanese stance, stating that, even though Americans allow easy access to their real estate, stock market, and trading ports, Japan's reception to Americans has been cold, even hostile. This article opens up questions that will push students to consider the cultural factors that cause Americans to see Japanese as cold and/or hostile as well as the cultural factors which affect Americans' way of seeing these traits. The third article, William A. Niskanen's "Japan's Trade Practices With the U.S. Are Fair," rebuts the second, stating that Americans are doing as they have always done, defining the game by their own rules. Instead of defining "unfair trade" by the internationally agreed-upon definition of "any

practice that is not consistent with rules to which each affected party has agreed," the U.S. now says that "any practice perceived to harm U.S. interests is unfair" (Niskanen 95). He adds that Japan has been especially targeted in this sentiment. This article allows students to explore the cultural factors that make Japan a target of American hostility.

The final text, chapter twelve of The Do's and Taboos of International Trade: A Small Business Primer by Roger E. Axtell, is entitled "Dealing with the Japanese Mystique." This chapter demonstrates statistically the importance of Japan to both American and world economies. The author then gives advice, from one businessperson to another, for how to most effectively deal with the Japanese in business. The author's rules include paying attention to and respecting the Japanese "pecking order," collecting as many business cards as possible, and arriving on time for meetings (Axtell 241-243). This assignment acts as the lead-in to the large collaborative paper.

The assignment sequence, which I have entitled "Diversity in Business," is based on an eighteen-week semester. The class meets twice per week for 1.5 hours, a total of three hours per week. The course is sequenced around the textbook chapters; therefore, each unit is

approximately three to four weeks long. This first unit, focusing on weeks one through four, is four weeks long.

The assignments are structured so that students can begin practicing all the skills they will need to succeed in this class and beyond: reading, writing, speaking, and listening. Subsequent assignments both build on prior skills and introduce new skills. In the first week, student groups form and begin reading the Ashbrook article, looking specifically at a series of questions which have them focus on cultural issues in that article and in their textbook.

The assignments in week two give students the opportunity to discuss the Ashbrook article with the class at large and within their small groups. The assignments ask them to practice writing by summarizing, to read the textbook and three more articles, and then to speak by participating in group work.

The assignments scheduled for week three ask students to practice all of the tasks they performed in week two as they begin library or Internet research for their large project. This means additional reading and summarizing, additional writing, and additional speaking with their group members and the class as a whole.

The final assignment in this sequence is a ten- to fifteen-page collaboratively-written paper. In the writing scenario I have created, fictional boss Walter Hughes wants

to solicit Japanese investors for his company's product, but he is intimidated by the thought of doing business with the Japanese for all the cultural reasons the readings and class discussions have uncovered.

The students must role-play as members of a committee drawn together by Mr. Hughes. Their committee's job is to write a report to Mr. Hughes discussing Japanese history, culture, and business hierarchies so he will be prepared when he goes to Japan. By the time the students have reached this part of the assignment sequence, they have examined America through the eyes of the Japanese, Japan through the eyes of Americans, and their own attitudes about the Japanese and U.S. trade with Japan. They then can bring together everything they have read, discussed, and written about in this large project.

In week four, the final week of this sequence, the students experience the negotiation that occurs in business writing when they begin working on combining individual drafts to create the final collaborative project. They also begin revising at this time. Students have both class sessions during week four (three hours total) during which to collaborate, as well as out-of-class time during which they can choose to meet with their group members.

Week five, while not a part of this first unit, is a transitional stage, for in it the students complete the

first unit and begin the second, which deals with business ethics. In week five, the students complete their final revisions of the collaborative project and look ahead to textbook chapter three. During weeks one through four, students also begin to read textbook chapters one, three, and four, so the concepts in those chapters, business communication in general and then a review of basic and advance writing techniques, can undergird the work being done on the collaborative report and provide support or scaffolding for the mechanics of writing (see Appendix A).

Although my description here is brief, I think that it provides a clear picture of how the sequence will work. This assignment sequence is consistent with the goals of collaborative business writing in that the individual assignments require the writers to interact with one another, they require discussion and a reaching of consensus, and they allow students' work and negotiation to be the focus of classwork and discussion. For example, the classwork during week four focuses almost exclusively on group work allowing for a decentered classroom. The work during week two as well as the two collaborative sessions during week four require the students to reach a consensus: in week two a consensus on how to most effectively combine their individual summaries and in week four, the more intense negotiation required to revise and combine their

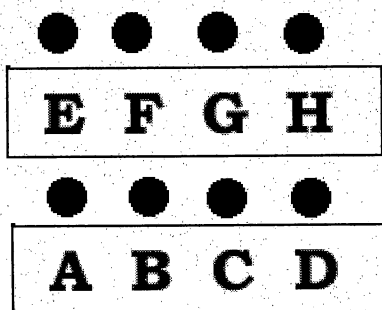
drafts into a single, coherent unit that answers the question posed in the assignment. In sum, this assignment sequence sets up a realistic business-related scenario during which students are given the opportunity to participate in a transitional discourse community similar to the one Bruffee described.

Classroom Arrangement

To support this model, the classroom setting as well as the instructor's pedagogy must differ from that of traditional classrooms. Ideally, chairs or desks in a collaborative classroom are arranged in clusters with the number of seats/desks in each cluster equal to the number of students in each group. Each seat/desk faces the other so that student writers can see and hear each other as they produce their text. This arrangement, more so than any other such as rows or one large circle, most closely resembles the collaborative work done at GECMSI. At GECMSI, writers worked in a loose semi-circle clustered around a large table. The cluster arrangement also resembles the grouping of workers by departments or specialties as practiced by many large companies.

For teachers teaching in rooms furnished with tables or in computer labs with fixed stations, seating arrangements

can pose a problem. If students cannot see and speak easily to one another and view the common documents simultaneously, then the essence of collaboration--the negotiation, the sharing of ideas and the pooling of resources--is threatened, and collaborative writing as I have described it here is less successful. However, teachers assigned to teach in either a computer lab or in a room with long tables can create clusters. In computer labs, teachers can gather students in clusters around a single computer or have them turn their chairs toward each other with one computer off to one side yet at arm's reach. In rooms with large or fixed tables, teachers can use the following arrangement:



Instead of students A, B, C, and D trying to work side by side, students A and B turn around and work collaboratively with students E and F while students C and D turn around and work collaboratively with students G and H. This arrangement allows for the face-to-face negotiation so necessary for successful collaboration.

The Model's Intention: One Piece of a Puzzle

David Bartholomae says that "students should master the figures and forms of academic writing" (70). Susan V. Wall echoes this conviction as she chronicles the progress of John, a student in the Basic Reading and Writing (BRW) class at the University of Pittsburgh. Near the end of her essay "Writing, Reading, and Authority: A Case Study," Wall states that she was "concerned...that much of what John had learned about composing had been abandoned" once he passed the BRW course (133). Happily, as she reports in the essay's epilogue, John did well in English 87, a writing course in his major, because he himself "put what he was learning [in English 87] together with what he had learned in Basic Reading and Writing" (135).

As Wall's essay suggests, it took John more than one writing course to mature enough to trust his own voice and his own skill as a writer. Wall helps us envision a college education as something like a jigsaw puzzle with each piece forming but one part of the complete picture. The model class I am proposing is meant to function this way: as one piece, which, when assembled with other pieces by the students, forms a complete education. This model, therefore, is limited in scope, focusing primarily on the "figures and forms" that will prepare students for the

rest of their academic and business careers. The model is thus limited to two broad categories of activities in which the students need to participate: learning the forms and organizational strategies of written memoranda and letters, and practicing all other forms of communication including oral communication, listening, and reading. Collaboration, as enacted here, enables students to learn the skills necessary to become successful business writers in a safe transitional discourse community. In other words, collaboration allows students to seek help in assembling crucial parts of their academic "puzzles."

Collaboration, and its focus on audience and communication between group members, is the place where university writing and workplace writing converge. It is during the collaborative process in the model discussed here that class assignments start to look and feel less like school work and more like the meaningful, purposeful work done by colleagues in the workplace.

Collaboration helps the classroom feel like a work place by providing a real audience and encouraging discussion and negotiation. According to David A. Lauerman and his associates at Canisius College, "audience response" was the "overriding concern" of the professional writers they interviewed for their study (Lauerman et al. 450). Students in other types of writing

classes often write for general or unknown audiences, or worse, for the teacher. Business writers, on the other hand, know "who they [are] writing for, and it [is] never "the general reader" " (Lauerman et al., 450). Business writers, the authors say, know their audiences quite well. Through using collaborative groups, this model sets up a realistic audience, similar to what the authors suggest here, an audience of the students' co-writers.

Negotiation is also important to the collaboration process. Collaborative writing distributes power to the group and away from the teacher by allowing writers to negotiate answers to questions and solutions to problems themselves. In other words, negotiation gives rise to the authority over the subject matter that empowers the collaborative group. Without authority, students have little stake in what they are learning, or worse, they may not even learn at all.

It follows, then, that because of this course's emphasis on collaborative writing and my belief that writing is an on-going cycle, I value revision. After having worked in the business world for four years where writing and revision occurred on a daily basis, I want my students to learn that real world writing does not occur as a single draft produced by a lone writer at a computer. Rather, writing is an active and interactive process that occurs as

writers read manuals on the subjects about which they are writing, consult notes from meetings where the subjects have been discussed, talk to co-workers about how a particular sentence sounds, borrow a dictionary from a supervisor to check the spelling of a certain word, and then write, printing, passing the document around for others to see and comment on--and then starting the cycle all over again. Collaboration and revision, the way they are performed by the collaborative groups in this model, mimic this collaborative and recursive way of writing on the job.

And finally, this model emphasizes the connection between writing and the other necessary components of the communication process: speaking, listening, and reading. For business writers, the composing process involves so much more than just writing. In fact, the course textbook focuses on the close connections between reading, writing, listening, and speaking. Guffey says that "successful people, in both their business and private lives, require a variety of communication skills," of which listening, speaking, and reading are the most important (315). This may seem like a statement of the obvious, but these skills are essential to business writers who use voice mail and telephones, meetings and presentations, along with writing to communicate successfully. And what better way to learn

all these skills than in a class designed to teach them in conjunction with each other?

Expectations and Grading

Teachers of business writing are particularly aware that, with regards to assignments, realistic and relevant must go hand-in-hand. Case studies and scenarios should realistically represent the situations students will encounter (or, for those students already working, have encountered) on the job. If they do, then students have a stake in what they do. They are drawn into the assignments, and the writing means something to them besides a good grade. The skills mastered through writing move out of the classroom and into students' personal and professional lives.

So now comes the hard part. Teachers of collaborative business writing have to make the assignments relevant and realistic, yet they still have to teach students the things they are going to need to know as future business writers: writing skills, proper grammar, oral communication. How should this be done? The model fuses these two goals and also develops expectations for student work. Although specific expectations for student work are formally

described in the course description and handed out with the syllabus at the beginning of the semester, I include, as an example, the collaborative project described in this sequence. The model creates a scenario that anyone planning to work in an industrial setting might encounter. The readings, while not likely to be introduced by a superior on the job, represent materials that could be on record in a company's research library or found on the world wide web. The summary, which might be done by one member of a committee for the benefit of all members, and the reason for writing all create a realistic scenario. Teachers using this model assignment, or one similar, do their part setting goals by creating a realistic case on which students can work and can then expect students to do their part by participating fully. By creating a realistic scenario, this model opens a door for the students to a somewhat surreal world: a world that is half classroom and half workroom, where scenarios are both fictitious and real. Thus, teachers can expect students to enter this world and not look back, to write for the fictitious bosses they way they would write for their own real boss.

Expanding on this idea, I find that this course expects a lot of the students. It expects that they want to work through difficult assignments and that they are willing to put time into this class. This class also assumes that the

students are intelligent and dedicated to themselves and their careers. The work the students do is difficult, as the first assignment sequence illustrates. Yet it simulates real world writing situations in a way that rote exercises can never do. Students who are able to stick with this assignment will prove their dedication to succeeding in school, and, by extension, their careers.

In the end, however, teachers must remember that the students are in school, and one question students will surely have about this course is how is the collaborative assignment to be graded. Will one grade be given to all students, or will each student receive a separate grade? There are a number of advantages and disadvantages to both ways of grading. One composite way to grade such a collaborative assignment is to give one grade for the whole project. This grade is the one each group member receives. However, an equally-weighted participation grade, which includes participation in group discussions and the amount of text each student contributed to the project as a whole, may also be given. Class time is then set aside for small group discussions so students' conversations can be observed, and students' individual drafts are turned in with the group project so that each student's contribution can be verified.

Problems and Solutions

Although I present this model in the abstract, I now conclude with observations drawn from a pilot that I conducted at the site. The pilot of this model went surprisingly well. However, two problems with the assignment sequence surfaced in this pilot study. The first problem was that the assignment sequence demanded a lot of hard work at the outset. Some students felt overwhelmed and gave up before giving the class a try. The majority of the students were in one- or two-year certificate programs and had much more immediate career goals than do many freshmen beginning their first of four years in a university degree program. Because of this, some of the students entering the class seemed to want an easy pass, a class that did not require them to think too much or work too hard. And, since several other sections of this class were being taught by professors who gave multiple choice tests, the students had every opportunity to drop this more difficult class and replace it with the easier one.

To overcome this problem, the revised model includes other projects such as a research paper on four professional journals in the students' chosen field and a résumé, professional portfolio, and letter of application. These other projects should prove interesting and relevant enough

to most students that they will continue with the class in spite of the amount of work involved in the collaborative project. Also, because students are shown that the assignment is collaborative, the revised model helps them understand that they will not be writing a ten- to fifteen-page paper alone; each individual's portion of the project totals only about three to five pages. The course syllabus now includes brief descriptions of the assignments, an explanation of how many pages each person's required portion is, and the dates the assignments are due.

The second problem was that of group dynamics. Group projects certainly have the potential to work quite poorly, and most students have participated in groups in which grades did not accurately represent individual contributions. Also, personality conflicts can arise in groups, causing group members to work below their normal potential. I continue to struggle with this issue. While the groups should be close enough to feel comfortable sharing writing and drafts with one another, the groups should not function chiefly as social gatherings. Business writing students need group work so they can experience working with people whom they do not know because in business this happens all the time.

To counter these problems, the revised model gives the students the freedom to choose their own groups and to change groups if they feel that they are encountering unresolvable problems with another group member or members. The revised model also offers guidance in assembling work groups as well as in group problem-solving strategies. Regarding group dynamics, the problems encountered with the pilot of this model never became so severe that students needed to change groups. The problems instead seemed to stem from a lack of desire to work with others and a fear that one person would do all the work and the other members would act irresponsibly and not participate. While I see no need to change the way I grade this assignment--each group member's grade represents a combination of the group's grade plus each member's individual contribution grade--I recognize the need to encourage each group to put their fears of group work aside, to try collaborating, and to put forth an effort to do so to the best of their abilities.

Despite the problems discovered during the pilot of this model, I am confident that, with close attention to solving the problems I encountered, this model can work because it combines the best of the process movement's beliefs--a shift in classroom authority and a belief in writing as a social process--as discussed by Bruffee and Trimbur, with Porter's respect for individual ideologies and

Couture's recognition of the special skills needed by business writers. It is a significant model because it allows for the best of classroom theory to come together with workplace practice in a site that is at once classroom and workplace.

Conclusion

Clearly, there are differences between classrooms and workplaces. In the classroom, the focus is on learning and assessment. The immediate audience for papers written in school is usually the teacher; the purpose becomes "because the teacher says I have to." The larger audience and purpose of school papers is often too far removed or not as immediate or relevant to students' lives.

At work, on the other hand, the focus is on text production. The immediate audience for papers written at work is usually known and is, more often than not, the writer's co-workers, subordinates, and/or superiors. The purposes of papers written for work are often immediate, even urgent, and have direct personal, financial, and professional benefits to the writer if completed or swift consequences if not. The two types of writing do not seem to resemble each other much at all.

However, as I hope this model shows, classroom writing and workplace writing need not be separate. Collaborative writing can bring the two worlds closer together by creating an atmosphere and an opportunity where learning can occur in a workplace-modeled environment. This model, I believe, combines the learning focus of the classroom and the known audience and immediate personal benefits of the workplace.

As do most studies, this one raises as many questions as it answers. Some questions for further study are as follows:

- How will students react to this kind of environment? Will they accept a classroom that functions more like a workplace?
- How should teachers' roles change? Should teachers still act like traditional teachers, lecturing and leading classroom activities? Or, should teachers become more like managers and oversee the general workings of the class while students take on more responsibility for the day-to-day activities?
- If we decide that students should shoulder more responsibility for the day-to-day classroom activities, how should the teacher-manager make sure that the students stay on task?
- How should grades be determined?

- What kinds of projects can be considered both educational and meaningful?
- On a larger scale, how might curriculum look? What should the goals of such a curriculum be?

These are just a few of the issues raised by this study, issues that will need to be studied further if this model is to be widely adapted for classroom practice. However, this study represents an important step in using collaborative writing to draw classrooms and workplaces together for the benefit of future business writers.

APPENDIX A: THE ASSIGNMENTS

Assignment #1 A
Foundations of Intercultural Communication

DUE: Week 2, Meeting 1

Although you all have a syllabus that provides general information on which textbook chapters we will be covering and when, I want to provide much more detail on your first group of assignments. The first sequence of assignments will lay a foundation upon which you can build the rest of this unit, the rest of the course, and possibly much of your future work in the business world, for this first assignment sequence introduces you to the world of intercultural communication.

You have already read the first textbook chapter, which covers intercultural communication and diversity in the workplace. However, your textbook only touches on issues that I think are worth studying in more detail. The concept of ethnocentrism, for example, is only given two paragraphs in your textbook, yet knowledge of this concept is essential to business communicators.

Your first assignment, to be completed this weekend, is a combination reading and writing assignment. The reading is a short article entitled "A View From the East" by journalist Tom Ashbrook. The article is quite interesting and I think you will enjoy it. Since the article is short, I want you to read it twice. The first time, read the article to get a feel for it, what it is about and what point the author is trying to make. The second time you read the article, think about the following questions:

1. Why are North Americans increasingly concerned with intercultural communication skills?
2. Describe the concept of N. American individualism as defined by your textbook. What is it? How do you see it at work in the article?
3. Ashbrook has worked hard using visual and emotional images to create a particular picture of America. What picture do you see? Please be prepared to point to specific places in the text to support your answers.
4. Ashbrook has also painted a picture of Japan. What picture do you see of Japan? Again, be prepared to point to specific places in the text to support your answer.

Remember, these are questions for you to think about, questions that should help you focus your second reading. We will spend a good deal of class time in Week 2, Meeting 1 discussing your answers to these and other questions.

The second part of this assignment is a short, informal writing. After you have read Ashbrook's article twice, I would like you to summarize it. Do not use this short paper to answer the questions above. Use this paper instead to gather your thoughts together about the article. The summary should be between one and two double-spaced pages.

Assignment #1 B
Foundations of Intercultural Communication

DUE: Week 2, Meeting 2

This short assignment is a reading assignment that will both build on the concepts we discussed in Assignment #1 A and will look forward to the next assignment in this unit.

Your syllabus states that you are to read chapter three in the textbook tonight. This chapter is entitled "Developing Basic Writing Techniques" and will introduce you to such concepts as redundancies, jargon, and precise wording. These concepts will become useful to you as you begin the next portion of this assignment sequence. Suffice to say for now, however, chapter three is the first textbook chapter on the mechanics of writing.

The other three articles that you will be reading tonight will be handed out at the end of class. They are not long, about 40 pages total, and again they are quite interesting. These articles, unlike Ashbrook's article, deal more directly with doing business with Japan. By this I mean that the three authors you will be reading over the next few days discuss U.S. trade and business practices with Japan as opposed to the personal narrative provided by Ashbrook.

As you read these next three articles, please think about the following questions:

1. In all of these articles, the U.S. is acting ethnocentrically. Where do you see this the most? Be prepared to point to specific places in the texts.
2. What are each author's attitudes toward Japan? What evidence from the texts supports this?
3. What is each author's outlook on U.S. trade with Japan? What evidence from the texts supports this?

Come to class Week 2, Meeting 2 prepared to discuss these and other questions.

**Assignment #2
Diversity Dilemma
Collaborative Writing Project**

We have been discussing cultural diversity in international business and the importance of understanding diversity when communicating with associates from other cultures. We have learned, for example, that Americans favor rather informal business settings and are quickly on a first-name basis with one another, while Asian cultures must establish kinship with their associates and often take time exchanging business cards and the like before a meeting gets under way.

We have found, from the readings in our textbook, that cultural diversity is not something to be angry about, nor is it something to be ignored when dealing with clients or associates from other cultures. Yet fear and ignorance of other cultures and their customs still exist. The additional materials we read about trade practices with Japan exemplify this. Based on all the readings we have done, consider the following scenario.

American businesses are rapidly expanding into foreign markets, and the company you work for, United TechniCorp, is no exception. The CEO of your company, Walter Hughes, is considering soliciting Japanese businesses that may be interested in one of United TechniCorp's products: conveyor belts.

However, Mr. Hughes is somewhat wary about doing business with the Japanese because he has heard that they are difficult to do business with, they are hostile toward Americans, and they like to waste time. Yet he knows that the future of United TechniCorp's trade lies in the Far East. To this end, Mr. Hughes has chosen a committee, of which you are a member, to advise him how to proceed. He will soon be making a trip to Japan to speak with potential investors and he wants the committee to help him succeed.

Mr. Hostage needs information on Japan-- its government, its people, its customs--to function and to be successful while he is in Japan. What should he say or do when he enters a room full of people? How does the government influence business and international trade? Are there any national holidays in the near future? Should he bring gifts with him? He is not looking for a list of answers to his questions, nor is he looking for your committee to write a sales pitch for him. He is looking for comprehensive detail on Japan and Japanese culture and business practices so he can feel comfortable while he is there and secure business with Japanese businesses. Your committee's assignment is to write a report of approximately 10-15 pages to prepare Mr. Hughes to meet with Japanese investors. You will have to use sources other than the articles to provide Mr. Hughes with enough details.

Before you begin writing, please elect group members for the following four positions: typist, secretary, contact person, and timekeeper. We will go over these position, and what each entails, in class. Also, before you begin writing, decide which members of your group will handle each part of the assignment. There are four areas that will need to be researched: the history of Japan (only about the last 20 or so years), government structure, business/class hierarchies, and family/religion/culture. We will also discuss this in class, and I will be happy to answer any questions you may have about the assignment next class time.

The calendar for this project is as follows:

Week 2, Meeting 2	Collaborative assignment given. Begin research,
Week 3, Meetings 1-2	Continue research on project. Begin writing.
Week 4, Meeting 1	Drafts reviewed by groups for content, accuracy. Continue writing.
Week 4, Meeting 2	Drafts to be reviewed by group members in terms of concepts in chapters 1, 3, 4.
Week 5, Meeting 1	Final drafts of collaborative project due.

Assignment #3
Diversity Dilemma Revisited

Revision. The Random House Dictionary defines the word "revision" as the act of changing or otherwise improving something editorially. While this is indeed true--when you revise a paper, you change it--revision is much more than this. To revise is literally to see again or to see anew. This is how I want you to come to understand the word "revision." Therefore, when you revise papers you have written, do not think of simply checking spelling or grammar. Think instead of retasting your thoughts on the subject, of savoring their aroma, of seeing new shades of color in your meanings. Revisit your ideas to make sure your words say exactly what you want them to say.

This third assignment, the last in this sequence, is both a reading and a writing assignment that will bring together everything you have done thus far in the semester. This assignment will draw upon all the texts you've read including the textbook chapters, and upon all the writing you've done including the summaries. You will put everything you have learned into the revision of this paper.

In class today, you will exchange papers with the members of your group. Read the papers you receive today as you have read everything else: once to understand the meaning and a second time to make comments. Use chapters 1,3, and 4 from the textbook to guide you in the comments you make. Also, use your own common sense, and the questions that I will put up on the board to guide your reading.

I want you to write notes to the author in the margins or at the end of the paper. If you really liked the way something in the paper was worded, say so, and say why. If you did not understand something, say so and what might be done to improve clarity.

We will spend some class time today discussing the details of this assignment, so if you have any questions, please ask them today.

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