

# Inkshed

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Newsletter of the Canadian Association for the Study of Writing and Reading  
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Where does the drama get its materials? From the "unending conversation" that is going on . . . when we are born. Imagine that you enter a parlor. You come late. When you arrive, others have long preceded you, and they are engaged in a heated discussion, a discussion too heated for them to pause and tell you exactly what it is about. In fact, the discussion had already begun long before any of them got there, so that no one present is qualified to retrace for you all the steps that had gone before. You listen for a while, until you decide that you have caught the tenor of the argument; then you put in your oar. Someone answers; you answer him; another comes to your defense; another aligns himself against you. . . . However, the discussion is interminable. The hour grows late, you must depart. And you do depart, with the discussion still vigorously in progress.

Kenneth Burke, *The Philosophy of Literary Form: Studies in Symbolic Action*, 3rd ed (Berkeley: U of California P, 1973) 110-111.

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# *Inkshed*

4.4. September 1985

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20 January, for 1 February  
5 March, for 15 March  
20 April, for 1 May

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5 December, for 15 December

A primary objective of this newsletter is to intensify relationships among research, theory, and practice relating to language, language acquisition, and language use--mainly (but by no means exclusively) at post-secondary levels. Striving to serve both informative and polemical functions, *Inkshed* publishes news, announcements, notices, reports and reviews (of articles, journals, books, textbooks, conferences, workshops); commentaries, discussions of events, issues, problems, and questions of concern to academics in Canada interested in writing and reading theory and practice.

Send materials, inquiries, subscription requests and payments to

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## A Call for Proposals

# The Social Contexts of Writing and Reading

(The Third *Inkshed* Working Conference)

McGill University  
Montreal, Quebec  
Friday, 9 May - Sunday, 11 May 1986

*Deadline for proposals:* 15 January 1986.      7-8 sessions, plus inksheddings and Inklings.

### AIMS

To consider the social contexts within which reading and writing occur, the influence of those contexts, and the extent to which they are taken account of in our research and our practice.

The following questions are offered as a means to focus proposals:

**The classroom as context for reading and writing:** What is the nature of the classroom context for reading and writing? Why and for whom do our students read and write? What roles do classroom contexts offer students and teachers? How does evaluation fit into the social contexts of reading and writing? From which contexts do we derive evaluation criteria?

**Research contexts:** To what extent does our research into reading and writing take account of 'real' language contexts? Can it? Must it?

**Contexts beyond the school:** Where, why, and how will our students be reading and writing after they've left us? How much do we, can we, should we prepare our students for the reading and writing contexts they will find themselves in outside school? What are the politics of reading and writing?

### METHODS

As with previous *Inkshed* conferences, sessions employing a wide range of modes of presentation are welcome--demonstrations, workshops, informal reports on work in progress, formal papers. We also encourage people to propose co-presentations.

In addition to some variation on the now traditional Inksheddings (periods during which all participants write), we will be introducing "Inklings"--periods during which participants will read brief excerpts or wholes (from any source) which illuminate or exemplify issues relevant to the conference theme. Examples of student writing are especially welcome.

Finally, we are introducing yet *more* work to our all-too-brief working conference: a pre-conference annotated list of "Suggested Readings for Inkshed III." We invite *Inkshed* readers to send along to Jim briefly-annotated references for any readings they believe will allow participants to benefit more fully from the conference. This cumulative annotated bibliography will be published periodically in *Inkshed*; we are certain everyone who has ever attended a conference will recognize the value of such a gently-required reading list.

Proposals should include name(s), address(es), phone number(s); title of proposed session, brief (200 words) description or abstract, brief description of method, and a statement of the aim or purpose of the session. Write to:

Patrick Dias / Anthony Paré  
Inkshed Conference  
McGill University  
Faculty of Education  
3700 McTavish Street  
Montreal, Quebec H3A 1Y2

## Using Generalizations: A Response to Rick Coe's "Subverting Linear Structures Once Again"

I would like to thank Rick Coe for his thoughtful response to my article, "Subverting Linear Structures" (*Inkshed 4.3: 1-4*). By holding up a mirror in which I can see my own article, he has shown me that I have not stated my case as clearly as I might have. Or, perhaps, in a polemical mood resulting from frustration, I have overstated it. Let me try again, and see if I can move the debate a little closer to synthesis.

My polemic really concerned pedagogy, not theory. I welcome, and try to participate in, the tremendously exciting search for useful generalizations about the reading/writing process, and firmly believe such generalizations are knowable. My concern in "Subverting Linear Structures," however, is with how such generalizations, as they come gradually and confusedly into focus, can most effectively be used in teaching. I believe that simply telling students of these generalizations, or sending them off to read them, is not the best or most efficient way to get students using them. Rather, I support an inductive approach that involves pointing out the generalizations *as they become relevant to tasks individual students are attempting*. I do not say to a student, "This paragraph doesn't sound right," and proceed to rearrange it. That would indeed be to make the student teacher-dependent, and to reserve to myself the position of guru dispensing mystic advice received from heaven. Rather, I point out (when my teaching is going the way I want it to and not the way Murphy's Law sometimes makes it go) exactly *what* principle of audience response, of paragraph coherence, of lexical accordance, of syntactic relationship, applies to this particular case. The student (again, when the universe is unfolding as it should) comes away with generalizations that arise from particulars, not the other way around. Such generalizations, I have found, are the ones most likely to be understood, retained, and used. This is quite different from denying the existence or usefulness of generalizations. (However, I see now I didn't make this distinction clear.)

Looking back over my article I also see I might have been a little less scornful of lectures and textbooks. Both devices frustrate me with their linearity. But if I tried to give my students *all* their principles in the form of hundreds of individual mini-lectures, I would be carried out of my office on a stretcher by mid-October. Therefore, I do use lectures to give my students an overview of principles (and, if possible, to jar them loose from any inflexible rules that might be hindering their writing). Then, when I confer with them in person, I can often relate my specific advice to the generalizations they have already heard but not necessarily been able to apply. It is at that point, when deductively presented principles are illustrated inductively, from their own writing, that most students are most likely to click. It's also when learning comes most alive.

The real purpose behind the article, I suppose, was to spread a spirit of dissent. I am frustrated that most composition courses *have* to be subverted; that the basic structure of such courses often encourages instructors to treat composition teaching very narrowly, as *primarily* a matter of conveying knowledge which is to be tested by rather than imparted by writing tasks. (This is, to borrow a term from Russ Hunt, the "default mode" for composition.) I am frustrated that to teach composition differently often requires a deliberate evading or outright defiance of departmental guidelines and expectations. Therefore I produced a little manifesto for composition activists, complete with instructions for making bombs.

I suspect that in telling this to people like Rick Coe I am preaching to the converted. I am sure we differ somewhat in our teaching styles, especially in the way we balance inductive and deductive learning. (We might differ even more in an ideal university, equipped with perhaps twenty students and a plane tree.) I treat explicit mass delivery of generalizations

and precepts as secondary, as a convenience that sometimes, when I'm lucky, speeds my students' learning a little. I resort to it chiefly when an unkind administration gives me more than twenty students and no plane tree. Rick, I suspect, places rather more faith in this method. But I think he would agree (if not, I'm sure I'll hear soon enough) that composition teaching is not *reducible* to the presentation of generalizations in one or another linear sequence. People are too frustratingly nonlinear to learn much that way, especially when they're trying to write something. Yet this is precisely the default mode encouraged by many English departments who have been driven into teaching composition at gunpoint. It is significant that the English department at the University of Calgary has "improved" its first-year composition course by increasing the weight of the final exam, which requires two essays in two hours, from twenty-five percent to forty percent. So much for writing as exploration and discovery. I've been working on ways to subvert that one for years.

I hope our thesis and antithesis have moved a little closer to synthesis (and that Rick can come down off the wall I drove him up). The important thing is that, when linear course structures, departmental guidelines, and textbooks (Sheridan Baker's springs to mind) try to lay the icy hand of the default mode on our teaching, we try to change them and by our teaching subvert what we cannot change. Generalizations should inform our teaching, but they must not become it.

Douglas Brent  
University of Calgary

## "Collaborative Inksheddings" from Inkshed II

*Inkshed* has now sponsored two "working conferences"—the first last August 1984 in Fredericton, the second this past May 1985 in Edmonton. Central to the experience of both conferences was what we call "inkshedding", which consists simply in this: (1) time is set aside for conferees to write after each session; (2) *ad hoc* "editorial" boards read the inksheddings and mark passages for "publication"; and (3) several times during the conference, these excerpts are typed up, photocopied, and distributed to the conferees. (I also "inkshedized" the Wyoming Conference on Freshman and Sophomore English this past July.)

In more detail. In both conferences ("Inkshed I" and "Inkshed II"), each session but the last concluded with the usual discussion/question period, but the time scheduled for this oral conversation was severely curtailed in comparison to normal practice (we tried to cut it off after only five or so minutes). We asked people to stop talking and to start writing—for at least fifteen minutes; and sessions ended only when people had finished writing. Our directions were simple and unprescriptive: first we set a context (by reference to the session that had just concluded, to other sessions, and to previous inksheddings), and then we suggested that conferees might respond in any way they chose. They could comment on, elaborate on, criticize or agree. They could address a question, issue, or problem that had been raised, tell about something that surprised them, discuss something they learned. They could sign their names or not, as they chose. (In this way inkshedding allows all conferees to become more fully engaged in the ongoing conversation of the conference. It also, of course, changes the nature of that conversation.)

We wanted conferees not only to use writing as a way of thinking and learning about what was happening at the conference; we also wanted conferees to interact in a writing-reading-writing interchange--which meant that we had to design a way for the Inksheddings to get published during the conference. Since, obviously, we couldn't transcribe and publish everything, we organized "editing boards" (their actual task involved not editing but excerpting), whose job it was to read all the Inksheddings and mark sentences, paragraphs, chunks, and wholes they thought would be of interest to all conference participants. (We suggested that the excerptors should read holistically and mark passages that "jumped off the page at them", that struck them as interesting, provocative, insightful.) In that way we tried to cut the Inksheddings down to approximately one-sixth of what was written. Finally, then, the excerpted (marked) Inksheddings were transcribed on wordprocessors, printed out, photocopied, and distributed to conferees--published--periodically during the conference.

Having told you all that, I need to add that the following pieces of writing were produced under slightly different conditions from those described above. As described above, Inksheddings are what might be called "focused" or "controlled" freewriting: they are produced in a loosely defined context, on the spot, in a severely limited period of time, by writers writing alone. These, however, from Inkshed II (wonderfully organized by Kay Stewart and Chris Bullock), were collaboratively written (although the nature of the collaboration took several different forms). The conference theme was "What Do We Mean by Process?" An *ad hoc* committee was asked to generate a set of questions that had been raised in the ongoing conversation--the presentations, oral discussions, and Inksheddings--of the conference. These questions provided focal points for small groups, each of which was charged to produce, in ninety minutes, a "position statement" on an issue implied in one of the questions. Thus, the Inkshedding context was rather more clearly defined, the groups had thirty minutes or so to discuss and plan their statements, all group members participated in the writing of the statement, and there might even have been a bit of time for revising. Still, they are first drafts--collaborative Inksheddings--produced on the spot and under the pressure of the moment. I think you'll find them interesting. /// Jim Reither

One group (J. Allwork, T. Bishop, C. Bullock, J. Flanagan, J. Reither, S. Stevenson) started out with this question: "In what ways have the organization and activities of this conference served as a model for teaching the theory and practice of writing?"; and revised it to this: "Has the content of the conference--the view of writing that is emerging--been reinforced by the structure of the conference? And can this relationship between content and structure be reproduced in the classroom? Should it be? How?" Everyone in the group provided at least a sentence to this statement:

The most significant feature of this conference is that writing has been used--used to generate other writing in the process of clarifying issues we are all concerned to clarify. In the classroom, in contrast, the usual model is to have products processed, completed, evaluated and then set aside. For many of us, the conference has shown us that we have been moving in the classroom from product to process but have never articulated that movement in theoretical terms until this conference. But though we use process in preparation and revision stages, we are using it to help students create products what are then set aside. The conference has been an ongoing process; our classes are organized as a sequential series of process to product tasks.

The issue that now confronts us is how we can modify classroom practice to incorporate this insight and structure writing courses in such a way that the process/product dichotomy vanishes.

Another group (D. Bogdan, E. A. Marsland, L. McCallum, W. Strachan, C. Sutherland) took on this series of questions: "What is form? How does it relate to process/product? To function? If composition is governed by function, how much can be taught (and how)? What is the traditional approach (formalist? product?)?" Their statement:

Function, which is determined by purpose and audience, must govern choices about form. Form must therefore be seen as dynamic, as offering enabling choices, rather than as static, restricting and disabling the message. What we want to aim at in our teaching is an idea of form suggested by Rick Coe yesterday--the idea of the grammar of form. We want to encourage in our students a familiarity with the varieties of form as natural as their familiarity with various sentence patterns. We want our students to acquire the same flexibility in their use of the larger units of discourse as they have in sentence patterns. We begin as writers with that chaos which necessarily precedes creation. As we shape the message we begin to make choices. The range of choice narrows as the process goes on, until at the level of spelling the choice disappears. But this disappearance of choice at the level of spelling in fact enables communication and does not inhibit it. Therefore such restriction at this level serves function. What we have, then, is something of a paradox: we can communicate only within community and therefore the very restrictions enable our messages. We need to achieve a balance between form and content, between individual and community--a relationship which is often seen as a duel, but which can more profitably be seen as a dance.

A third group (N. Besner, P. Dias, R. Hunt, A. Paré) addressed these questions: "Is a text ever a 'product', or is it always a transaction? What kinds of transactions should/do concern teachers of writing?" Their collaboration resulted in four individually-written, but clearly complementary statements:

[1] How to inspire a real intention to say something--to want to write something which will affect a reader? This may be the most crucial question for the writing teacher to answer. And how to "inspire" this intention without ordering it--how to allow the intention to surface? (What constitutes a real writing situation for any writer--including a student writer?)

[2] Real intentions are subverted by synthetic contexts. Moffett argues that a meaningful series of rhetorical tasks and linguistic demands will automatically program syntactic development and the rhetorical structures that we try to teach/promote. Susan Somes speaks of 'felt sense' as directing, moving, and generating good writing. 'Felt sense,' 'real intentions' are for us the phrases that underscore what we believe should be an objective of any program: helping individuals take ownership (responsibility) for their texts (the ones they write and the ones they read).

[3] The quality of response by an audience (reader) is a powerful and profoundly subtle force affecting the writer's attempt to establish communication. The kinds of response which are most useful to writers are, paradoxically, the most subtle and the least subject to conscious attention. As readers, then, we need to be actual readers, in the sense that we really do want to read and understand what's being said. This is profoundly difficult, perhaps impossible, in a traditional model of writing instruction.

[4] If there is a product, an outcome, in writing which is distinct from the process, it is in the transaction between the reader and the text. Viewing the student's essay as an inert, static artifact leads to an emphasis on correctness and form; viewing it as part of the ongoing process of communication between writer and reader leads to an emphasis on effectiveness and function.

A fourth group (R. Coe, R. Collier, M. Legris, M. Moore, D. Quon) chose to try to deal with this set of questions: "What is the relation of socio-political context to the teaching of composition, especially to the evangelical concern with process? What historical forces are at work? Can we apply dialectical analysis? Can we see the problem, in part, in terms of labor and production?" (The ellipses indicate places where I could not decipher the handwriting; only a very few words are missing.)

We found ourselves discussing the aims of education, and thus, too, the aims of a composition class, in the context of the present historical crisis of monopoly capitalism. Two metaphors with anchors possibly in the literal fueled our analysis. 1) The production metaphor: text is, of course, product; the process of composing is . . . the means of production. A text certainly differs in its characteristics and potential uses from pig iron, but in an information age it's final valuation may be the same. Two problems arise in looking at the means of production: a) who owns it--the teacher (who functions as the boss) or the student (who functions as the worker)?; and b) should collaborative writing be the dominant mode of composing or must writing remain essentially a cottage industry? 2) The computer metaphor: computers can only count, list and identify, which are skills similar to what students like writing to be reduced to and what product-centered teachers suggest writing can be limited to. Composition teachers who see process not as an end in itself but as a means really of producing a more effective product . . . must resist being confined by the computer metaphor. We can, then, in effect raise consciousness while at the same time preparing students for participation in a capitalist economy--unreflective participation as a worker in the information society results from adherence to the product model and the computer metaphor. Our teaching strategies must therefore be designed so that this shift in consciousness of process, . . . questioning, and dialectic method persists long after our classes conclude.

Writing as an ability that all students should possess results from the American influence. The shift in climate resulted not so much from a change in attitude about making education egalitarian, but from the shift in the nature of work from manual labor to information processing. An interesting aberration in this social transition has occurred recently . . . : The Back to Basics movement, which emphasizes rules, memory, product-centeredness, and is ultimately part of the Old Testament stress in our culture that reveres obedience and order is inimical to natural human inquisitiveness. It arose as a reaction to perceived and actual abuses and looseness in the so-called '60s. Because it is in opposition to process pedagogy, its stridency may in part explain our own tendency toward evangelism.

Finally, this question--"What authorizes the paradigms we are loyal to?"--resulted in this (unsigned) piece:

Why Do We Believe What We Believe?  
Passion and Modesty in Conviction

Our beliefs are our theories. Everyone has a theory which assumes a pattern in the phenomenon. A dichotomy, which is a simple heuristic taking the poles of a continuum which in turn is an oversimple representation of the real world, is whether the pattern lies outside in the world waiting to be discovered, or whether the pattern is inside us and one which we impose on the world. Probably it's both of these. The internal part is the result of personal experience; exposure to a single theory or to several theories which we synthesize into one theory; intuition which is related to

temperamental predispositions; systematic enquiry to validate theoretical constructs; and to the charismatic influences of key mentor figures in our networks.

We decided this is only an interim statement. There were various levels of conflict in the members on this statement. We decided that some, like Keats, could tolerate great ambiguities in our theories and had less trouble with this task; others needed to be more sure and had trouble agreeing to this statement.

The dichotomy was not a matter of opposing points of view. They are complementary and it is important that we regard our different perspectives as ways of informing our own theories of the discipline.

## *The English Quarterly* — Call for Submissions

The editors of *English Quarterly*, Victor Froese and Stan Straw, invite submissions in the following categories for review for publication in the 1985-1986 volumes of the journal.

### Refereed Submissions:

- Research reports: reports of individual research projects or research efforts;
- Research syntheses: reviews of pertinent theory and research in an important and timely area;
- Theory development or extension papers: discussions of new theoretical stances or extensions of recent theoretical thought or development;
- Position papers: discussions of timely issues in the field of English education;
- Essay reviews: extended reviews of a book or books, examining it/them in the context of the field of English education.

### Non-Refereed Submissions:

- Book reviews: reviews of a single book either for professionals or for students (e.g., professional resources or school texts); approximately 1,000 words;
- Book notes: "thumb-nail sketches", descriptive rather than analytic, of books meriting attention but not full-length reviews; 300-700 words;
- State-of-the-art reviews: reviews of current work being done in a selected area; 1,000-1,500 words.

### Deadline dates for submissions:

Winter issue	October 1, 1985
Spring issue	January 1, 1986

Send submissions to

The Editors  
*The English Quarterly*  
Faculty of Education  
University of Manitoba  
Winnipeg, MB R3T 2N2

## The Reading/Writing Connection: Limiting the Focus

In a recent contribution to *Inkshed* (2.6: 5), Russell Hunt suggests that the "immediate, crucially important question—for all concerned with teaching either [reading or writing], at whatever level—may be stated this way: What, exactly, is the nature of the connection between reading and writing? How does one affect the other?" Hunt's answer (in accord with the current paradigm shift toward a cognitive-developmental approach to language arts) is to explain the critical reading and writing strategies of university-level students in terms of K. Goodman's "top-down" model of reading. The new paradigm is both pervasive and persuasive, and, as Hunt notes, has by analogy gained currency at all levels of the reading spectrum of activities, from elementary reading programs to the reader-response school of criticism.

But does the analogy work? Should we view the rhetorically sophisticated processes of critical reading and writing through the lens of a model derived from the oral reading of elementary school children? I think it doubtful that all reading and writing conforms to such a limited cognitive model.

My concern here, then, is with two widely-held assumptions implicit in Hunt's position: (1) that the process of reading is conceptually-driven and is the same for fluent readers as it is for beginning readers; and (2) that, when it comes to reading and writing, features from one theoretical model are transferable to another.

It is crucial for future debate that the academic community differentiate the term "reading". At its most basic level, the term may refer to the child's utterance of words represented by text; or, it may refer to the complex of abstract reasoning associated with the learning from, and the interaction with, text at the highest level of adult reading development. Why assume that the "process" remains constant? The continuum of reading development itself would suggest not a single rigid process but a fairly flexible interaction of both bottom-up and top-down processes: the data-driven mastery of rules for automatic decoding, and the conceptually-driven integration of both prior knowledge and textual response. Even Goodman (*Language Arts* [1979] 56) acknowledges that a shifting of bottom-up and top-down processes may occur during a single "reading". He says that

proficient readers are both efficient and effective. Such readers get to the meaning with minimal use of cues, minimal monitoring, confident prediction, minimal correction. Of course, *proficient readers can shift to more cautious processing as their level of confidence drops.* Proficient readers can also become non-proficient readers in coping with some texts. (Italics added.)

If readers process text both from the top down and the bottom up, then attempts to teach either writing or reading as an exclusively top-down process are open to question.

In the classroom, the reading and writing processes are of course interrelated, integrated into the student's school experience. And it is true that Bond and Dykstra's (1967) studies on first-grade reading instruction found that a writing component integrated into a reading program actually improved reading achievement. But it is an ellipsis of logic to conclude that, at a theoretical level, the reading and writing processes are therefore complementary—that one process can be explained in terms of the other.

The true nature of the reading and writing connection will depend, at least in part, upon the level of fluency and the concomitant integration of reading processes. It is very tempting to adopt a single model of reading (from the numerous competing models) and use that model to examine encoding in the same manner that decoding has been examined. First, though, we should be sure that the model accounts for levels of cognitive development; and second, we

must look for a common ground where the two independent processes can be viewed as coterminous.

Revision (itself a conflation of reading and writing activities) seems to be a logical starting place, for what composition researchers are really talking about when they focus on the 'vision' in revision is *reading*. The first step should be a detailed analysis of the reading that takes place when writers (both fluent writers and beginners) read their own compositions. It may well be that the process of reading another's text is very different from the process of reading one's own writing—at least for unskilled readers and writers.

This is where reading theory can help—not by providing suggestive analogies but by lending a theoretical perspective on a key constituent sub-process of writing.

Will Garrett-Petts  
Cariboo College

## Report: Canadian Caucus, 4 Cs 1985

On March 22 approximately twenty-two people attended the third annual Canadian Caucus session at the Conference on College Composition and Communication (4 Cs) in Minneapolis. Jim Reither, who chaired the informal meeting, gave a brief account of the previous Canadian Caucus sessions, which had been set up to give Canadian delegates to the 4 Cs an opportunity to meet, exchange ideas, and make plans for improving communications with each other and for promoting studies in rhetoric and composition in Canada.

Announcements were made (highly rhetorical, in some instances) about subscribing and contributing items to *Inkshed* and to the Canadian Council of Teachers of English (CCTE) publications, and about participating in the CCTE and 'Inkshed II' conferences in Edmonton in May 1985 and the Fourth International Conference on the Teaching of English in Ottawa in May 1986.

It was decided that at next year's 4 Cs (New Orleans, 13-15 March 1986) we should plan for three opportunities for Canadians to get together:

(1) A get-acquainted social, with cash bar, on the first night of the conference, so we will recognize each other during the rest of the conference.

(2) An informal Canadian conference like the previous ones, where we get an update on relevant activities and plan future ones. As in the past, this would be offered in the Special Interest Group slot in the 4 Cs program. [Note: *This session has been scheduled by 4 Cs organizers. It's set for Thursday, March 19, 5:30-6:45 pm.* Jim Reither]

(3) A more structured session in which Canadian delegates would describe writing programs at their own institutions. Anyone interested in this session should contact Nan Johnson, C/O English Department, University of British Columbia, Vancouver.

It was generally agreed that one of the significant benefits of the 4 Cs for many of us has been the opportunity to meet Canadians with interests and problems similar to our own. Next year's meetings in New Orleans ought to be an appropriate place to foster Canadian (as well as Cajun?) connections.

Phyllis Artiss  
Memorial University of Newfoundland

## Cohort Report

/// Nancy Carlman (UBC)

A. The December 1984 issue of *College Composition and Communication* contains articles on writing assessment by Edward White, Leo Ruth, Sandra Murphy, Gordon Brossell, Barbara Hoetker Ash, and Alan Purves. The Purves article is about the cross-national study of student achievement in written composition undertaken by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement.

B. At a conference in January 1985 in Seattle, sponsored jointly by the Washington Educational Research Association and the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, Purves elaborated on the cross-national study. I think it has some important findings so far, that may inform our teaching of students who grew up not only with languages other than English but with rhetorical traditions different from the contemporary North American models.

After pilot-testing of topics (called "prompts" in the new jargon), Purves's team found a few which could elicit a broad range of writing from students in fifteen countries including (for instance) Finland, Italy, Australia, Thailand, Nigeria, Indonesia, England, and the U.S. The topics included "My Native Town," "What Is a Friend?"; a topic on the generation gap, and what Purves said was the "best" topic--"Write a letter to a student two years younger than yourself who will be coming to your school about how to succeed in writing class."

The team also had to develop a scoring method which would work in all the countries. The difficulties are detailed in the *CCC* article. In essence, the accepted scoring scale included three main sections: 1. quality and scope of content (organization and presentation of content; style and tone); 2. grammatical features (spelling and orthographic conventions); handwriting and neatness; 3. response of the reader.

Purves explained that the first section was accepted by all countries, the second was used by some, and the last was included to eliminate what he called a "halo effect". Actually, the last section increased scoring reliability but did not add any new information.

Another cross-national difficulty that became obvious was the differing rhetorical traditions students had internalized. The students were assessed at three levels: 1. the last year of the self-contained classroom (i.e., grades 5, 6, or 7); 2. the last year of compulsory education (approximately 15); and 3. the pre-university year.

The study identified five rhetorical dimensions on which students' papers from different countries differed: 1. personal/impersonal (U.S. papers could be either); 2. plain style/ornamental style (U.S. papers tended to be plain); 3. abstract/concrete (good U.S. papers tended to be concrete; good papers from Italy and Taiwan tended to be abstract); 4. single/multiple (a dimension describing the tendency of U.S. students to narrow the topic, particularly for essays for English classes; however, Finnish students, and U.S. students writing history essays, tended to write as many details as they could); and 5. propositional/appositional (U.S. papers tended to be linear: they stated a position, developed it, and restated it at the end; other cultures use more associational or circular organisation).

Canada is not participating in the study, although Purves said he had some interest from British Columbia (before "restraint") and Ontario. Since many of our composition textbooks are U.S., I suspect Canadian students' writing would be fairly similar to U.S. students' writing. However, those of us who teach ESL students at university level need to recognize that our students may be grappling not only with a new language but also with new rhetorical traditions. That the language is different is obvious to both student and teacher; that the rhetorical tradition is different may be obvious to neither.