Perspectives on Academic Writing in European Higher Education: Genres, Practices, and Competences

Perspectivas sobre la escritura académica en la educación superior europea: Géneros, prácticas y competencias

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Abstract

Academic writing in European higher education is a little explored field hidden behind fifty major language and fifty national educational systems of which it is part. The article aims at developing a perspective for studying the diversity of writing in Europe and finding a shared language for analyzing student writing. The article recaps baselines theories for the teaching of writing and reports on three important European writing traditions. The main part of the paper is devoted to three foundational conceptions for writing: The role of genres in understanding student writing, the function of writing practices for the organization of student writing and the meaning of writing competences for the teaching of writing.

Key words: Academic Writing; Higher Education; Genres; Competences; Writing practices.

Resumen

La escritura académica en la educación superior europea es un campo poco explorado y oculto bajo cincuenta lenguas y otros tantos sistemas educativos nacionales que la componen. El artículo tiene por finalidad elaborar una perspectiva que nos permita estudiar la diversidad que implica escribir en Europa y desarrollar un lenguaje compartido para analizar la escritura de los estudiantes. El artículo revisa las teorías básicas en la enseñanza de la escritura y se centra en tres importantes tradiciones de escritura europeas. La parte principal del documento está dedicada a tres conceptos fundamentales para la escritura: el papel de los géneros en la comprensión de la escritura de los estudiantes, la función de las prácticas de escritura para organizar lo que escriben los estudiantes y el significado de las competencias comunicativas para la enseñanza de la escritura.

Palabras clave: Escritura académica; Educación Superior; Géneros; Competencias; prácticas de escritura.

Background and Aims

In the past decades, writing in European higher education has been affected by several epoch-making influences like internationalization and new language demands, the rise of the new literacies as a result of the computer and internet age, the political changes in European higher education exemplified most clearly by the Bologna process, and, finally, the new philosophies of and technologies for the teaching of writing, many of them imported from the US. We have to recognize that we – the writing teachers and researchers – are part of rapidly changing education systems in which we find many actors like teaching and learning specialists, online learning divisions, disciplinary teachers, pedagogical societies, politicians and parliaments, university associations, Google, Microsoft, Facebook, and Apple. All of them influence how students write and how their teachers make use of writing for learning.

Much of the writing in higher education, on the other hand, is still connected with traditions which have grown as part of the teaching philosophies and writing cultures established at the universities in the last centuries (Chitez & Kruse 2012). These traditions form a baseline for each country from which new developments set out and from which new writing practices and new forms of teaching are initiated. Knowing these different starting points is necessary for understanding the variety of writing cultures in Europe but is not sufficient for understanding the directions which the new developments point at. A new dynamic has taken hold of all higher education in Europe with similar problems and similar questions for each country. Whether the solutions will be alike is not yet clear but it is obvious that all countries can only gain from an exchange on their writing policies. We find models for good academic writing not only in the Anglo-Saxon world but also in the various European traditions. What unites the teaching of writing in Europe at the moment are the similarities in the transformation processes with their various stresses and challenges.

In this paper, I will first have a short look at the different basic writing cultures which were established in Europe in the past and which, to a certain extent, still form the base for academic writing. The linguistic and cultural diversity of the European continent is both an enriching and a dividing factor when textual norms and directions for student writing are in question. Writing routines as they exist in primary, secondary and higher education are strongly rooted in national cultures but are difficult to compare and difficult to evaluate with respect to their effects on intellectual and literacy development.

The main part of this paper will be devoted to the elaboration of three different perspectives by which student writing in higher education can be analyzed. Perspective one is on genre and analyzes the various textual forms which are used for teaching. It will be shown that each genre has a different function for teaching which we have to understand if we want to use it purposefully. The second perspective is on writing practices and looks at the different contextual and organizational factors which determine student writing. It will be shown that formal aspects of writing assignments are all but trivial for understanding and conceptualizing student writing in educational programs. The third perspective is on competences. If we want to teach writing deliberately and use it effectively for student learning we have to break it down into its various components to understand how it develops. It will be shown that a look at

writing competences is essential for connecting writing with disciplinary knowledge, communicative abilities, process and procedural skills, genre and language demands.

All three perspectives are interconnected with the main conceptual approaches to academic writing which have led theory building and research in the past decades. Probably the most fundamental approach for modern writing pedagogy is the process approach which, starting in the 1970s (Emig 1971, Flower & Hayes 1980, 1981, Perl 1994, Nystrand 2006), introduced a completely new way of teaching writing grounded on an understanding of what writers do or think and how writers develop and replaced traditional writing instruction based on the teaching of "good language" or correct textual norms. Main concerns of the process approach are the planning of writing, revision, feedback, and reflection (cf. Pritchard & Honeycut 2006). Although criticized for not paying enough attention to the social context (Kent 1999), genre (Hyland 2003) and to language (Bizzell 1982, Hyland 2011), this approach still forms the base of all writing instruction.

The study of contextual factors affecting literacy practices has been influenced most sustainably by another influential approach, the Writing-in-the-Disciplines (WID) tradition (Russell 2001). WID approaches were able to demonstrate the impact of disciplinary affiliation on the way writing is valued, used, and taught (Langer and Appelbee 1987, Walvoord and McCarthy 1990, Thaiss and Zawacki, 2006, Poe, Lerner and Craig 2010). All of these studies were able to demonstrate that writing is grounded on the epistemic assumptions of the respective disciplines and is used to introduce students to the various forms of disciplinary thinking and arguing. All of these studies see the disciplinary context as a the most influential source of making students engage in their majors and getting acquainted with the respective genres and rhetorical practices. Writing, from this perspective, is a means of integration into and specialization in their fields of study. Adaptations of this approach to the needs of European universities are frequent (for instance, Deane and O'Neill 2011).

The UK-based Academic Literacies Approach (ACLIT) is a third way of conceptualizing academic writing. ACLIT is somewhat critical about the assumption "that students are merely acculturated unproblematically into the academic culture" through writing as Lea (2004, 741) states. Lea wants to see writing studied in a broader context and understands it as a more diverse activity than just being tied to disciplinary discourse and academic writing in its narrow sense. To the ACLIT approach, writing should not be seen as a set of universal skills but rather as an open field also affected by new literacies (Street 2005) and multiple genres (Lea 2004). A critical attitude towards the aspect of power involved in the rituals and mysteries of academic writing is recommended (Lea and Street 1998). The developmental aspect is stressed thus seeing literacy as a continuous way of interacting with written products from many sources.

Rarely mentioned in the context of basic theories of writing, but very influential in most European countries are approaches to writing from the English as a Foreign Language disciplines, may they be called EAP (English for Academic Purposes), ESP (English for Specific Purposes), ESL/ EFL (English as a Second/ Foreign Language) or TESOL (Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages). In many universities, L1 writing teachers and L2 English (writing) teachers do similar work although with little

interaction among each other and little coordination of their work (Kruse 2013, in press). The teaching of writing in English is usually reserved to postgraduate levels and to faculty. Basic literature for this kind of teaching comes from two sources. One is the work of John Swales (1995, 2004, Swales & Feak 2011) who analyzed the main academic research genres and connected genre teaching with the teaching of English as a foreign language. Swales' works are used in all parts of the world for the teaching of writing in English as L2, but are more and more used in L1 contexts, too. A second source is the work of Ken Hyland who analyzed academic discourse in English with respect to such linguistic variables as metadiscourse, citation practices, hedging or self-reference (Hyland, 1998, 1999, 2000, 2005) and connected this with the teaching of writing, both in L1 and L2 (Hyland, 2002, 2003, 2011). Typical for L2-approaches to writing is their unproblematic attitude towards the teaching language which has been abandoned by the process approaches some 50 years ago. At European universities, problems from this approach arise when English language norms collide with those of the national languages. At many universities, especially in Eastern and Central Europe, the problems seems to be that English writing instruction is the only one available while for the national language writing is hardly ever taught at all (Harbord 2011).

European Traditions

European academic cultures have their common roots in medieval university structures and teaching practices which were built on Latin as a lingua franca. With the change from Latin to national languages in the 17th and 18th century, new models of academic discourse in the national languages were developed and institutionalized. The shift from oral to written forms of research communication (Ong 1982, Russell 2001, Kruse 2007) led to new forms of discourse based on written text. Students were made to write papers instead of disputing their theses in front of an audience (Kruse 2007). At the beginning of the 19th Century, three essentially different modes of using writing for teaching and of teaching writing emerged in France, England, and Germany. All three had considerable influence on writing in Europe and contributed to it differently. Each of these writing cultures was adopted and transformed by the respective national educational systems and led to unique academic cultures. Different from the US, where writing courses have been introduced as early as 1872 (Russell, 2001), European universities have seen the teaching of writing not as a field in which they should engage. The silent assumption always was that writing follows thinking and that teaching should place more emphasis on developing critical thinking skills than in developing linguistic competence.

The French tradition is closely related to essay writing. There are four different forms which are called commentaire composé, dissertation, étude d'un texte argumentative, and discussion. Donahue (2002, p, 136) explains that these essay forms are used already in the lycée, the last three years of secondary education but still are in use at the first years in higher education, both as exams to a given topic or as a take-home assignments. These essays are characterized, among other things, by easily recognizable external structures, by a "strong reliance on paraphrase without citing", by a statement of "the problem" and "the plan" at the beginning and a thesis

statement at the end. All of these essays train certain intellectual and linguistic skills by introducing students to scholarly argumentation and by making them refer to ideas and facts from the respective disciplines. Today, the variety of genres in French higher education is much greater (Delcambre & Reuter 2010, Chitez & Kruse, 2012) and several research-related genres (term papers, research papers) are equally used. For the French writing culture, however, the training of students in using well-structured, linguistically and argumentative well composed papers, is still a baseline.

Another tradition of essay writing developed in the UK. It is often seen in connection with tutoring systems used in Oxford and Cambridge (for instance, Palfreyman 2008). Tutorials are additional teaching structures which accompany regular courses and independent library work. Similar to the German seminars, they connect writing with oral communication among students or between student(s) and tutor and introduce students to scholarly work. As in France, essays were used for learning and assessment in most education programs, except for some science disciplines. The types of essays are numerous. There are narrative, descriptive, evaluative, personal, argumentative, comparative, critical, expository and otherand other essays. Today, a whole industry seems to offer students support for essay writing or even writes essays for them. Nesi & Gardner (2012, p. 38) speak of essays not as a single genre but as a "genre family". They consider the social purpose of essays "to demonstrate/ develop the ability to construct a coherent argument and employ critical thinking skills." In their corpus of student texts, essays are only one out of 13 genre families. What makes the genre interesting for understanding writing cultures is its peculiar approach to teaching thinking. It is a variable genre which allows adaptation to many teaching purposes and to many desired student activities.

A third tradition of student writing was developed in the German-speaking countries and is connected with seminar teaching (Kruse 2007, 2012, Pohl 2009, Macgilchrist & Girgensohn 2011, Chitez & Kruse 2012). At the beginning, seminars were teaching arrangements offered to small groups of selected students in addition to the regular study programs. Students would work with a teacher on a selected research field or topic. Seminars always included student writing and made students submit papers in regular intervals. Seminar writing practices were originally connected to the introduction of libraries at the institutes which were used to make students study original sources instead of simply recap knowledge from their professor's lectures. In contrast to essays, seminar papers are a longer form of student papers usually devoted to a self-chosen topic. In the 20th century, seminars were offered to all students in undergraduate as well as graduate programs and the writing of seminar papers became identical with academic writing itself. Academic writing in this sense is markedly different from writing in secondary education and demands an "immediate immersion in the discourse of specific knowledge communities" (Foster 2002, p, 213). It gives students, as Foster (2002) continues to explain his observations from German universities, a "wide autonomy in choosing the occasions, time frames, deadlines, physical sites and working rhythms for writing." It seems that a model of student writing has appeared with seminar writing which is different from essay writing. It is more closely connected with research-oriented teaching and the practices of thesis writing than the essay. It does, however, not provide the opportunity to train thinking skills in a more selective and less demanding way as the essay forms would allow. With

the new structures of the Bologna process, however, writing becomes more regulated in German contexts and essay writing slowly moves into the curricula as an additional genre.

The models for student writing these three countries provided have been transferred to several other European countries. The German kind of seminar writing has spread with Humboldt's university model to most Northern and Eastern European countries while the French model has influenced several of the Romance countries. The export of essay writing in the UK tradition is of more recent origin and seems to follow the teaching of English foreign or academic language.

Since the first writing centers have been opened in Europe some 20 years ago, the need for improved writing instructions is widely recognized by university administrations and educational politics but not very often resources for such institutions are provided. Most changes in the teaching of writing are rather grass-root initiatives from study programs or individual teachers. First-year writing courses, writing-intensive seminars, portfolio courses or provision for thesis writing have become common at many universities. Little of this is communicated within universities, however, and even less to a wider public. Little of this is initiated by specialized writing teachers or writing centers but more by disciplinary teachers who look for new ways of using writing in their classes. Textbooks on student writing are available in almost every country and teachers who would like to improve on their writing pedagogy will find many ideas and instructions there.

Associations on the research or teaching of writing like the Special Interest Group Writing (as part of EARLI, the European Association for Research in Learning and Instruction), the EATAW (European Association for the Teaching of Academic Writing) and the EWCA (European Writing Centre Association) have started to organize discourses across Europe, while national organizations are connecting writing teachers and researchers at national levels in several countries. One of the oldest of such institutions is the yearly Writing Development in Higher Education Conference in England; another example is the bi-annual conference of the Swiss Forum for Academic Writing. New Europe-bound journals like the Journal of Writing or the Journal of Academic Writing have also been successful in initiating exchange on research and teaching. A showcase for research from Europe is the Studies in Writing Series, edited by Gert Rijlaarsdam, which recently published a comprehensive volume on European writing research (Torrance et al. 2012). The influence of US-bound research and teaching organizations has contributed much to develop a theoretical and methodological base for research and teaching (see, for instance, Dean & O'Neill, 2011, Castelló & Donahue 2012, Delcambre & Donahue 2012, Russell & Cortes, 2012).

Perspectives on the Teaching of Writing

To develop an European view on academic writing we need some kind of meta-communication on the purposes, practices and textual forms of student writing. As we have seen, student writing in national contexts is often bound to traditional genres which seem to be unique or at least do not seem to equal any genre in the English-speaking communities. The "referat", for instance, is a genre used in Ukraine. For

anyone not socialized in Ukrainian higher education, it is hard to understand what this practice means. From descriptions of Ukrainian colleagues, I know that the referat is connected with literature searches, reading and summarizing so that we might assume that it equals a term paper. Still, it would take a closer examination to find out what exactly students have to do when writing a referat, how much time they are granted for writing it and what their teachers would expect from them.

To analyze and compare student writing across cultures it is important to have concepts at hand by which writing practices can be examined. Three such concepts or perspectives are outlined in the next chapters, one focusing on genre and the functions of writing, the second on context and writing practices, the third on writing competences and skills. These perspectives may not be the only one ones that matter but cover a good part of what should be studied when a writing practice like the referat is at question.

Perspective 1: Genres and their Functions for Learning

When we look at student writing, it makes a difference which kind of texts we make our students write and which kind of thinking, acting, reading the production of the text will demand. It has been said, that genres like the various essay genres are integral part of writing cultures. We may call such genres, which are used for teaching, "educational genres". They are created by certain institutions in a local, national or international context and are often used for long periods of time once they are established and accepted by all stake holders. Nobody in the UK would doubt that the essay is a main teaching genre, as little as anyone in Germany would question the usefulness of the seminar paper. Both, the essay and the seminar paper are flexible genres (or genre families) which may be adapted to the teaching needs of many disciplines and several levels of higher education.

Genres may be seen as results of categorizing texts (or other cultural products) into prototypical classes which fulfill similar functions and share some rhetorical, structural or linguistic features. In its broadest sense, the term "genre", as Hyland (2003, 21) says, "refers to abstract, socially recognized ways of using language". When certain kinds of texts are used repeatedly in a context they will stabilize. Those using the genre will learn to discriminate it from other genres and expect it be used in a certain context or for a special purpose. It should be noted that the term "genre" is also used to make distinctions between other cultural products like film, art, or music. For individuals in literate societies, understanding genres is an important part of cultural knowledge and allows individuals a quick orientation in the constant flow of textual (or other cultural) products from many sources and media.

There are three main theories trying to account for the various aspects of genres, as Hyon (1996) suggested, each characterized by a slightly different perspective on their topic. The New Rhetoric approach (Miller 1998) sees genre as "social" or "rhetorical action" which is connected to recurring situational demands or "rhetorical situations". The constructivist impetus of this approach places the emphasis more on their pragmatics than on their linguistic or structural form and sees genres based "in the conventions of discourse that a society establishes as ways of 'acting together'"

(Miller 1998, p. 136). This approach has been most influential in the US-American tradition of teaching of writing.

The Systemic Functional Approach (Halliday 1985) led to an understanding of genre as a "staged, goal-oriented, purposeful activity in which speakers engage as members of our culture" (Martin 1984, p. 25). This approach is less hesitant in describing the linguistic means used in genres and their structure which is mainly given by its different parts. It places special emphasis on the analysis of generic text types such as description, narration, or recounts as basic elements used by all genres (see Martin & Rose 2008). It is mainly based in Australia (also called "Sydney school") and mainly used in primary/ secondary school and second language teaching. The third line of genre theory is connected with the ESP (English for Special Purposes) approach (Swales 1990, 2004) and sees genre characterized by communicative purposes. It stresses the connection of genres with discourse communities using a certain genre or genre system. The detailed analysis of academic genres like the research article made it an important resource for teaching in all academic fields. While originally developed in the context of teaching English as second or academic language (for instance, Swales & Feak 2012), today it is largely used in L1 teaching as well.

No matter which definition one would follow, there are a several aspects of genre which all theoreticians would agree with. Genres are closely connected to communities of users. The members of these communities use the genre actively (by writing) or passively (by reading). Genres are integrated in cultural or professional contexts and are used for defined purposes in these contexts. Educational genres as used in primary, secondary, and higher education are firmly integrated in learning arrangements and teaching philosophies. Such genres like, for instance, the essay forms, the term paper or the thesis variations have been used for many generations and tend to be highly conventionalized by descriptions in textbooks, on assignment sheets or university websites. Educational genres show similarities to those genres used by researchers for reporting, discussing or presenting research results (Swales 1995, 2004) but still remain some features characterizing them as learning genres used to train students in various aspects of disciplinary thinking and professional practice.

With Emig's (1971) distinction of learning-to-write vs. writing-to-learn, the notion of writing as a tool for learning has been established. The cognitive approach to writing, however, focused more on the "how" of the writing process than on what is learned by it. The genre approach for the teaching of writing is a good base to make distinctions between different kinds of writing. As we have seen, the purpose of essays is a different one than that of the seminar paper. Both genres make student do different things, create different kinds of thought and meet other expectations of their teachers. Nesi & Gardner (2012, p. 22) state this in the following way: "If you ask a student in Sociology, or in Engineering, what is involved in writing assignments in their discipline, they will soon start to explain that there are different types of writing – essays, research proposals, reports, projects and more – and that each of these has a different function, each relates differently to research or practical work being done and to reading and lectures in the discipline; and so each is organized differently."

In an analysis of a large corpus of student texts, Nesi et al. (2008) and Nesi & Gardner (2012) isolated about 100 different genres and categorized them into 13

"genre families" which they then assigned to five major functions of student writing. These functions are:

Demonstrating knowledge and understanding: To this category belong genre families like "explanations" which make students explain facts or concepts like "code switching", "fast mapping" or the "functioning of the eye." The second genre family Nesi & Gardner (2008) mention is "exercises" which were often tasks from mathematics or statistics and demanded deductions or applications of formulae to certain problems.

Developing powers of informed and independent reasoning: "Critiques" and "essays" are the two genre families covering this function of writing. Both, analytical and critical evaluations of topics which make students discuss, analyze, critique, review, argue interpret or compare a topic. Both genre families are further subdivided.

Developing research skills: "Literature surveys", "methodology recounts" and "research reports" are the most important genre families of this section. The genres subsumed under these families are useful for preparing, reporting, summarizing and reviewing research and research literature. Long essays and theses are important parts of this category.

Preparing for professional practice: A considerable number of genres are directly related to professional issues like case studies, problem questions, design specifications, and proposals. "Problem questions" are called assignments from Law in which a scenario is developed for which the writer has to develop an analysis of the legal situation. "Design specifications" are genres typical for constructive disciplines like computer sciences and engineering which demand the design of a product or the production of other artifacts like a user's manual. Proposals for business projects are another writing assignment type for this category of genres.

Writing for oneself and others: In this category fell narrative recounts, which are to a large part narrations on historical or personal events. Another group of texts are fictional narratives. The third genre family is called "empathy writing" and contains media-related texts for a non-academic audience to prepare students "for professional engagement outside the academy" (Nesi & Gardner 1012, p. 216).

The description of these functions is probably the most detailed account of the uses of genres in student writing ever given on the base of an empirical study. It demonstrates that little is won if we continue to argue in a global way about "academic writing" as long as we don't make distinctions about its different forms and uses. A simple formula for "writing to learn" seems not applicable; there are simply too many forms of learning and genres used for learning.

Looking for a common denominator of student writing, we might argue that it is connected with various ways of dealing with knowledge, such as developing, collecting, searching, testing, systematizing, analyzing, criticizing, reflecting, applying or transforming knowledge. All these ways of handling knowledge may be seen as some kind of disciplinary or critical thinking as, for instance, brought forward by Bean (1996).

It is also worth looking at the various connections of writing with teaching forms like lectures, seminars, projects and practice courses. Writing may also be looked at as a way of academic acculturation (Prior & Bilbro 2012) allowing students to react to disciplinary knowledge at several levels: From the learning of basic skills and actively (re-) constructing disciplinary knowledge to the acquisition of critical thinking and research skills and from a reflection of and familiarization with professional practice to professional knowledge communication.

Perspective 2: Writing Practices and the Contexts of Student Learning

A second perspective useful for looking at student writing is devoted to a very practical point of view: How is student writing initiated, organized, structured, and graded? Student writing is, as the last chapter has shown, part of complex learning arrangements in which students write and develop as writers. The organization of writing in such contexts depends on the setup of the study program as well as on the genres chosen. The term "writing practices", in addition, refers to what writers, tutors and teachers actually do with texts and how they arrange the production of texts in the classroom or in the students' overall learning context.

It may be felt that such formal aspects do not have much weight compared to, for instance, the question of what students write or which genres they use. But this is not true. The organization of writing matters and initiating student writing in the wrong way may turn an assignment from a positive learning experience into a useless routine. Not all kinds of writing are helpful for learning (Russell 2001). Too much or too little time granted for writing, too many or too few writing assignments at a time, too much or too little guidance for an assignment may all be detrimental to its expected gain.

For a European perspective on writing, writing practices are an important matter as they allow comparing writing on some unobtrusive and easy-to-catch aspects. How many assignments students get, for instance, or how much time is granted for a paper can be assessed with little reference to language-bound issues like genre or to discipline-specific aspects like the rhetorical qualities of texts. The term "writing practices" does not belong to the most important analytical categories for the study of writing but matters the more when it comes to very practical questions of writing pedagogy. Looking at thesis writing, for instance, shows that the length of theses and the time granted for writing vary greatly. Samac, Prenner and Schweth (2009, 20) report from a study in Austria that "…not everywhere but at most universities a Bachelor thesis has to be written. Some require two theses whereas some students may have the choice to write a long or two short ones, in some instances with the specification that one is on basic research, the other practice-oriented. Only in rare cases no Bachelor thesis are required". [translated by the author]

The number of ECTS points (European Credit Transfer System), according to the same authors (p. 21), centres around the average of 10, with extremes of 4 and 20 credit points while its length varies between 25 and 100 pages. Each credit point covers 25-30 hours of work. We can assume that variations are even greater when we look at thesis writing in other European countries. Needless to say, a thesis demanding a workload of 100 hours gives writing a different meaning than one requiring 500.

The most important dimensions of writing practices may be subsumed under the headings of instruction, time, and collaboration. These aspects may seem formal but open a window on several deeper features of writing like writer autonomy, author roles, feedback, or supervision. "Instruction", in this sense, covers all information given to students make them understand what is expected from them and any kind of guidance provided to them. "Time" covers all regulations concerning deadlines and temporal arrangements of writing while "collaboration" covers all relationships and interactions that arise from writing, including those to peers, disciplinary of professional communities. The following list of issues covers the most important aspects of writing practices, which should be taken into account when systematically integrating writing in a study program. They are organized along the headings of "instruction", "time", and "collaboration".

Instruction

In most fields of learning, instruction would be treated separately from practice. In academic writing, however, instruction is integrated in its practice as some kind of provision or guidance while writing. It is a common practice at European universities to initiate student writing for learning and/or assessment without teaching it beforehand. Similar to many complex competences, it may be assumed that writing can be learned only in connection with its practice and not in an abstract, decontextualized way. In most cases, writing instruction is, therefore, part of writing-to-learn arrangements when students receive a writing assignment and start working on it. Instruction may be given before, during, and after the actual writing takes place. The most important kinds of writing instruction seem to be the following:

Initiating writing: The kinds of instruction students receive with their assignment is an important factor for success in writing. Such instructions should refer to the assignment purpose, the task, the process, and the product (Bean 2011). Writing assignments may vary with the level of education. At the entrance level, assignments should be more elaborate and oral instructions should be added to make students understand what they are supposed to do. At higher levels when students are acquainted with the writing culture of their institution and discipline instructions may be restricted to genre, deadline, and size of the paper. A good assignment would make students feel that they are not fulfilling an assignment but write for a larger purpose (Sommers & Saltz 2004). It should be kept in mind, however, that most assignments need negotiation and that a productive writing culture should allow students to clarify all open questions.

Selection of a topic: Choosing a topic is not only a matter of practicability but also a matter of competence and motivation. Students are generally more motivated for writing when they can write on a topic of their own choice than when working on a default topic. It is, however, an additional effort of teaching to making students understand what the selection of a topic demands. The choice of a topic is closely connected to motivation. Students need to be interested in a topic to keep up motivation while writing an extended paper or a thesis. It is interest in the topic that makes writing a meaningful activity (cf. Hidi & Boscolo 2006). Strategies for providing

topics vary greatly. The essay writing tradition set out with prepared topics for all participants but often allows choosing from several alternatives. Strategies from seminar writing might provide overall themes from which students would select one and adapt it to their own interests. Thesis writing is even more inventive in providing topics. In some institutions, students are completely free to choose a topic from all fields of their discipline while it remains a matter of negotiation with a supervisor to delineate the topic. Other institutions may make suggestions for topics and let students choose one of them.

Supervision, tutoring, and feedback: Probably the most effective part of instruction for student writers comes from supervision or tutoring activities connected with feedback. Sommers (2007 quoted from Rogers 2010, p 372) concluded from a study of over 400 undergraduate students from Harvard that feedback matters "when, and only when, students and teachers create a partnership through feedback – a transaction in which teachers engage with their students by treating them as apprentice scholars and evolving writers, offering honest critique paired with instruction." What seems to be needed most by students is a direct and flexible communication on the student's accomplishments with support for the further development of the text.

Evaluation and assessment of writing: Variations in assessing and grading student texts are great and may be connected with different forms of feedback for the writer. It makes a difference whether and to what degree student writers are informed about the criteria their texts will be assessed by or not. Assessment is part of the overall writing culture of an institution and is an important factor in encouraging or hindering students to develop as writers (Harrington 2010).

Time

The amount of time granted for writing is not only connected to the scope of a paper but also to the kind of independence required in fulfilling a certain assignment. Foster (2006, p. 61) argues that time patterns as indicated by deadlines, free time or time autonomy shape students' work in essential ways and may be characteristic for certain academic cultures. He noticed a markedly different degree of time autonomy in the German university system as compared to the US-American one. Seminar papers, term papers and theses demand more time and need more time autonomy for students as, for instance, essay writing which may restrict time to a couple of days. Still, it would be unwise to see a more generous time frame generally as more favorable than a more restricted one. A five-minute prompt during a lecture may work well as a clue for reflection and a one-week assignment may be perfect for writing a summary of a research article or a book chapter. It is the right mix of different assignments lengths that counts.

Independent work and autonomy: Writing is one of the most important tools to induce independent work in a study program. Writing an extended paper makes students read and produce knowledge instead of receiving it from lectures or text books. Using time well for a writing task has to be learned and time may alternatively be used productively or spent with procrastination. If ample time is granted, there is an obligation for the teachers to provide provision for writers so that they can

overcome writer's blocks and stay in flow. The more time is granted the better the supervision or the tutoring offered should be.

Dealing with deadlines: By adopting the Bologna changes, European universities moved away from the traditional wide-stretched, liberal study programs and introduced some variation of the three plus two year structure characterized by less time and assessments for every course. This led to a higher number of writing assignments and a greater workload for students through writing. The general policy concerning deadlines has changed very much with these developments. While European universities traditionally had rather open and negotiable deadlines, today the trend moves towards strict deadlines. Local cultures, however, may preserve old traditions or confuse negotiable with strict deadlines.

Author roles: The development of appropriate and variable author roles depends on a frame for student writing allowing enough time for extended papers going beyond the surface level and managing the difficulties connected with entering disciplinary conversations (Russell & Foster 2002). For student writers, the transition from secondary school to university demands students not only to adapt to new genres and adopt new rhetorical practices but also to find into new roles connected with the organization of extended writing/ research projects.

Collaboration

Although seemingly a solitary activity, writers, in fact, interact with others in many ways. Much of this interaction takes place on paper (or screen) and connects writers with the ideas, publications and research results of other members of a disciplinary or professional community. Bruffee (1984) called this kind of interaction "collaboration" as distinct from "cooperation" which involves partners actually working together. He views academic discourse as an eternal conversation on a topic which individual scholars join with their own contributions. Any discourse in academic fields shows the signs of collaboration and interaction with others by its citation practices and the ways of referring to others' works, as Hyland (2000) has shown. Understanding and practicing this kind of collaboration is one of the main prerequisites to give texts a quality as "academic". For the learning of writing, the direct forms of cooperation among students, however, are of no less importance. Students need responses to their writing in order to revise their papers and improve their quality (Beach & Friedrich 2006). Cooperation on writing also allows reflection to raise awareness of writing and increases motivation. There are many ways in which responses can be provided for student writers:

Group work: Student papers can be written individually or cooperatively as group work. There are arguments for both, individual and cooperative writing. Cooperative writing helps students reflect their writing and exchange competences necessary for composition.

Peer feedback: There are many forms in which feedback may be given. There are oral and written forms. Feedback can be given in a formal or informal way and can be supported by feedback templates, scoring grids, or criteria lists. It may be given on

proposals, drafts or submitted papers. It can be provided by peers, tutors, supervisors or disciplinary teachers (for an overview, see Beach & Friedrich, 2006).

Student support groups: Cooperation among students can be organized in various ways. Feedback groups can be implemented in seminars or organized among thesis writers. Self-directed support groups as initiated by Girgensohn (2007, Macgilchrist & Girgensohn 2011) allow students to learn about writing and support each other in their individual writing projects. Such groups may be initiated by a writing center or by the students themselves.

There are large differences in European higher education systems, with respect to all aforementioned aspects, i.e., to which degree students may write cooperatively, in which way peer feedback is organized, how much time autonomy is granted, and how writing is assessed. To a large extent, these practices determine the meaning that writing receives within an institution and the role it assumes for the development of student writers.

Perspective 3: Writing Competences and the Teaching of Writing

Writing is not a simple skill that is learned for once and then practiced invariantly. This truth stands at the beginning of any deliberate teaching of writing. But if writing is not "simple" as a skill, what is it then? Complex skills are called "competences" or "competencies". Such competences are thought of as clusters of abilities, knowledge, understanding, action skills, experience, and motivation (Klieme et al. 2007, 37). Competences are not only mental units but are rooted in active engagement, experience, and action. Most competences are actively regulated and developed consciously. To understand the connection of the various kinds of sub-competences, a competence model is needed which explains how they interact and relate to performance. Many of the sub-skills of competences run automatically and are unconscious during action.

To understand and teach academic writing it is necessary be aware of the hierarchical structure of writing competence and the many sub-skills necessary to perform writing well. Stating competences positively is an important step for getting away from deficit models of writing which ground the teaching on a lack of linguistic or thinking skills. Writing competences may be seen as clusters of skills which are connected to several areas like disciplinary knowledge, communicative skills and so on. We can teach all these aspects separately, if necessary, to make them routinize them and make them available automatically.

Competences in educational programs develop along the demands of the teaching assignments. The writing competences students develop will depend on how we make them write and how we instruct them. In order to instruct them well, we have to know how the respective competences are structured.

Looking at academic writing as a competence, we have to assume that it is an integrative activity that stands at the interconnection of several domains like disciplinary knowledge, procedural and process skills, communicative and discourse-related abilities, understanding of media for text production and communication, genre and textual knowledge, and, finally language competence. What makes writing

an integrative activity is its potential to connect these domains. It should, however, be noted that writing also has the function to train student competences in each of these fields. The main domains to which writing competences are connected have been outlined, for instance, by Kruse & Jakobs (1999), Beaufort (2007), Kruse & Chitez (2012). They may be described as follows:

Connections to disciplinary knowledge: Academic writing must be connected with disciplinary knowledge otherwise content cannot be generated. Many studies have shown how writing and disciplinary thinking (for instance, Langer & Appelbee, 1987, Walvoord & McCarthy, 1990) relate on each other and how disciplinary thinking is shaped by writing. Disciplinary knowledge itself, of course, is not part of writing competence but academic writing cannot be created without it. The reliance on disciplinary knowledge is a prerequisite for writing but also the result of it. Students construct knowledge (or at least they learn to do so) by writing and in the same time acquire disciplinary knowledge by reading and synthesizing it.

Connections to process and procedural skills: Teaching the writing process is probably the most important domain for writing teachers. Writers should learn the steps in which writing proceeds, the recursive nature of writing, the actions of planning, idea generation, and revision. In research writing, writers also have to acquire knowledge about process management and co-ordinate writing with research. Process competence, however, is not only a prerequisite for writing but is also built by writing. It cannot be learned in an abstract way but it can be supported by writing instruction and supervision.

Connections to communication and discourse knowledge: Relating a paper and its content to its audience and situating it in a discursive community demands another set of skills which is connected to an understanding of the respective communities and to the degree in which students feel connected to them (for instance, Bruffee, 1984). Discourse and citation practices (Hyland 2000) as well as the construction of appropriate author roles and of an authorial voice (Nelson & Castelló, 2012) form the linguistic side of this competence field.

Connections to media use: Media use is a fourth part of writing competence which has become of special importance with the new media and new literacies. The various media used to produce, communicate, discuss, publish and submit text are by no means self-evident for students. The new literacies demand not only new competences, strategies and dispositions to handle the new media but also the participation in a new global community (Leu et al., 2007, Coiro et al., 2008). Due to the same authors, one of the greatest challenges of the new literacies is their constant change and the need of adapting to them. The new literacies are neither a single nor a homogeneous set of competences and they are related to reading as well as to writing and communicating.

Connections to genre knowledge: As has been explained, genre is a main concept to make understand how writers relate textual features to contextual purposes. Genres mediate all writing processes in higher education and connect them to overall functions for thinking, learning, research and professional practice. Genre awareness (Devitt 2009) or genre understanding (Swales 1995, Hyland 2003) are competences

which students have to develop in order to become members of academic communities.

Connections to linguistic skills: Writing, finally relies in many ways on language competence from basic aspects of spelling, grammar, and syntax to rhetorical means like hedging, metadiscourse, intertextuality, and self-reference (for an overview, see Kruse & Chitez, 2012). Recently, many linguistic features of academic writing have been explored by corpus studies and the development of student writers with respect to their linguistic skills has been demonstrated, for instance by Pohl (2007) and Steinhoff (2007).

Looking at writing from the perspectives of a competence model shows that writing is not an isolated skill but integrated in an array of neighboring competences. It can evolve only when all of them are addressed and develop at equal pace. Writing competence is not separable from disciplinary knowledge and critical thinking, from understanding writing processes and procedures, from communicative and discursive skills, from media use and new literacy demands and, finally, from genre and language competences. Writing develops, as Rogers (2010, p. 374) summarizes from a review on longitudinal studies in the US "in multidimensional and nonlinear ways" and depends on a large number of factors related to classroom practices, student engagement, teacher behaviors and genres. We need models, therefore, not only for skills development, but also for the development of writers and have to cross-check these developments with overall goals for higher education.

Conclusions

New orientations for the study and teaching of academic writing in Europe have to be found in the divers field of higher education and the changing field of academic literacy. What leads European universities into a new understanding of academic writing cannot be put in a single model or even ideology but has to be developed in practice. The teaching of is not done by writing teachers alone but by all disciplinary teachers who make use of writing in their classes or supervise student theses.

Development of the teaching of writing in Europe demands both an exchange on traditional genres and an exchange on new writing practices or best-practice models. Bologna has set the frame for the teaching in higher education to which the teaching of writing has to comply. In many ways, Bologna supports the introduction of new teaching models and provides arguments for a deliberate and explicit teaching of all important competences connected with academic writing and their various transition fields to learning and research.

The teaching of writing will continue to stand in the conflicting field between national languages and English. Models to connect the teaching of both are yet to develop. Undergraduate education will continue to be taught in national languages while graduate education will continuously move towards English as language for writing and instruction. The teaching of writing has to be done in both languages and has to be grounded in a conception of multilinguality.

What unites the teaching of writing in Europe is its future rather than its past. Transformation processes are very similar in most countries and the directions of change seem identical (though not necessarily the solutions). International projects and a transfer of teaching approaches seem a good way of learning from each other. Hopefully, writing in Europe will maintain (part of) its cultural diversity and will gain a shared identity not by adopting a unified model but by understanding similarities on the background of cultural variation.

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