

English for Interpreting the World: The Experience of a Course for First Generation University Freshmen

Ada Haiman Arena

Mildred Lockwood Benet

Resumen

Esta investigación acción presenta los datos obtenidos en dos secciones (56 estudiantes) del curso de inglés básico 3003-3004 del Departamento de Inglés de la Facultad de Estudios Generales, UPR, Río Piedras durante el año 1999-2000. Este nivel de inglés como segundo idioma (ESL) lo componen los estudiantes que obtienen 450 o menos en la prueba del College Board (ESLAT). Tras año y medio de investigación en la sala de clases, encontramos que un curso que integre aspectos cognitivos, afectivos, sociales y de desarrollo del lenguaje a través de la escritura como proceso, nos permite cumplir mejor con nuestra misión educativa en la Facultad de Estudios Generales. Las investigadoras argumentan que escribir ensayos es una parte indispensable de la educación universitaria. Por tanto, todos los estudiantes incluyendo a los menos proficientes en el inglés deben poder expresarse por escrito. Los hallazgos de esta investigación señalan que los estudiantes del nivel básico 3003-3004 pueden escribir ensayos y que pasar por el proceso de escribirlos los puede ayudar en la adquisición y consolidación de destrezas.

Descriptores: Universidad de Puerto Rico, Educación Superior, proceso de escritura, investigación en acción.

Abstract

This action research study reports on data gathered from two sections (56 students) of Basic English 3003-3004 at the University of Puerto Rico, College of General Studies (CGS) during the year 1999-2000. This level serves the least skilled students in this English as a second language (ESL) course as measured by their College Entrance Examination Board ESLAT scores (450 or less). After a year and a half of classroom research in INGL 3003-04, we have found that a university course which integrates cognitive, affective, social and language development through writing as a process enables us to meet our educational mission more effectively. The investigators argue that essay writing is an indispensable part of any students' education and all university students should be able to express their ideas in writing; the least skilled students are no exception. Without this ability, students will graduate unprepared to confront the demands of the new global scenario. Findings of this action research suggest that the lowest level students can write essays, and that essay writing can help them in the acquisition and consolidation of all skills.

Keywords: University of Puerto Rico, ESL higher education, process writing, action research.

Introduction

One of the most critical issues we face as English as a second language teachers is how to offer a full educational experience to those students with very rudimentary command of the language. Many times these students are given remedial or skills development courses in lieu of academic courses. Yet, a university education must offer ideas to think through (Schumacher, 1973) not just vocabulary and syntax. The skills students develop are to be used in the acquisition, expansion and creation of ideas. Therefore, linguistic skills are means not ends in themselves. The ultimate goal of education is to correctly read the world and act productively in it. Vocabulary and structure are necessary but insufficient to meet this educational end. In our experience with Basic English 3003-3004 students, we have found that writing is an indispensable element in teaching them not only how to use English but why.

We argue that essay writing is an indispensable part of any students' education and all university students should be able to express their ideas in writing; the least skilled students are no exception. Denying them this opportunity would be equivalent to giving them a second class education (Finn, 1999, Freire, 1993).

Context

This action research study (Mills, 2000) reports on data gathered from two sections (56 students) of Basic English 3003-3004 course at the English Department, College of General Studies during the year 1999-2000. This level serves the least skilled students in English as measured by their College Entrance Examination Board ESLAT scores (450 or less). The official course description characterizes their English language proficiency as follows:

Students at this level understand social conversation with difficulty and have great problems understanding academic speech. They speak in an attempt to meet basic needs, but remain hesitant. They also make frequent errors in grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation, and often fall into silence. Their speech is sometimes unintelligible. They can read simple academic and non-academic discourse at a literal level with the aid of a dictionary. **Their writing shows serious deficiencies in content, organization, vocabulary, structure and mechanics. They tend to translate literally from Spanish, which makes their writing very difficult for a non-Spanish reader to understand** (English Department Official Course Description Nov. 1997, p.1).

The purpose of this action research study is to present evidence that these students cannot only write essays, but that essay writing is fundamental in meeting the linguistic and extralinguistic goals of this course. We want to establish how essay writing promotes conceptual and social growth as well as English language skills and thereby allows us to more integrally fulfill the university and College of General Studies (CGS) missions.

Finn (1999) in *Literacy with an Attitude* reiterates an often made distinction between domesticating education and empowering education. In the first, students learn functional knowledge that will allow them to do certain things, like get a job, what Dewey (1966) characterizes as learning to execute the purposes of others, in other words, a slave. Empowering education, on the other hand, prepares students for independent action and thinking. It is what Dewey (1966) describes as the ability to frame one's own purposes, judge wisely, evaluate desires and consequences, select and order means to achieve goals. According to Finn (1999), essay writing leads to empowerment because it "exploits writing for the purpose of formulating original knowledge" (p. 125). Finn (1999), citing Gee, explains how essayists must take an assertion, examine it, ferret out the assumptions upon which it is based and state them as explicitly as possible. At the end of this writing process, unstated and frequently unconscious assumptions and implications have been made explicit and inconsistent assumptions and implications have been confronted and resolved. The end product is new knowledge (p. 125). This, in a nutshell, is why the essay, not the sentence or the paragraph, is the form we strive for in our course. The cognitive difficulty inherent in making ideas explicit, unified and coherent leads to new patterns of thinking which should serve the students well in all facets of their lives—the workplace, the home, the community, the nation.

It is our contention that although English 3003 students have very limited English language skills, they must be initiated into academic discourse from the very beginning of their university experience if they are to be successful academics. How do we do this? Through the writing process approach (WPA) we put all four language skills at the service of their ideas. That is, they must not only read and listen and speak English, they must meaningfully use English to record and construct how this listening and speaking and reading come together to strengthen, weaken or change their beliefs. Therefore, we teach English for academic discourse which is a specific use of English for specific types of interaction. That is, the essay gives them practice in the formalities of academic writing since their previous school experience usually did not emphasize issues of support, plagiarism, paraphrasing, language formality, logical organization and other aspects of academic discourse.

In summary, our four research questions were:

1. Can our lowest level students write essays?
2. Can essay writing help them in the acquisition and consolidation of all skills?
3. Can essay writing reveal conceptual and social growth?
4. Can essay writing allow us to tap into the affective connection with academic content?

Theoretical Framework

In the College of General Studies (CGS), language skills are not taught in strictly utilitarian terms, i. e. not just for reading academic texts in other classes or occupational use in a future profession. Granted, in many, if not all instances, the students think their only need for English is to get a better job. But, the CGS courses prepare students for other aspects of their lives: their roles as citizens, parents, spouses, neighbors...etc. And their effectiveness in these roles as measured by their contribution in the workplace, the home, the community, the nation and the world (Barzun, 1991). Therefore, education cannot be limited to the transmission of facts, but must offer a “toolbox of ideas” (Schumacher, 1973, p.89) with which to understand the world and ideas to think through.

General education especially addresses those large universal questions that lead to a disciplined inquiry into the vital issues of human existence which are often overlooked in specialized disciplinary study, science, and technology. In a world where the humanities continue to lose ground to technology, science and commerce, quantitative studies are more valued than qualitative work. Yet, this study wants to contribute to the fact that the CGS English courses are not simply about vocabulary and structure but focus on the ability to better interpret the world. The whole purpose of the CGS is to look at the bigger picture.

Participants

This study was undertaken with 56 freshmen from their pre-basic summer course in 1999 to their Basic English 3003-3004 in 2000. These students belonged to the Special Academic Services Program (PSAE) at the CGS, a program for first generation university students, predominantly working class students from low income homes. This federally funded program offers support services such as counseling and tutoring to insure academic success and reduce attrition rates.

The students at this level have scored 450 or less on the ESLAT. Working with these students we have found that writing is an essential element in strengthening their thinking and transcending mere skills development in the English classroom. Many remedial or skills development courses do not include writing because grammar and vocabulary building, as well as oral proficiency, are considered prerequisites for writing. In our project, we found that the least proficient students could indeed write essays using the writing process approach (WPA) and, moreover, that essay writing was fundamental in promoting both English language development and cognitive development. Writing allowed us to more effectively accomplish the university mission of preparing our students to use English to participate in national affairs as informed, critical and truth seeking citizens.

For the purposes of this paper we selected one student from the 56 who participated in this study. Delia (pseudonym), one of the least skilled students during the pre-basic summer course (1999) for incoming English 3003-04 in the Program of Special Academic Services, was a shy student both in her native Spanish as well as in English. She felt very insecure and fearful with her English. Delia

studied in a rural public school and this was her first experience living away from home. She typifies the most difficult case of Engl. 3003-3004 incoming freshmen at the University of Puerto Rico.

Procedure

From the summer of 1999 until May 2000, all 56 students participated in the writing process. This process offers students an opportunity to use the language by drafting, revising and editing. Zamel (1987) states that the process approach to writing establishes “a supportive environment in which students are acknowledged as writers, encouraged to take risks, and engaged in creating meaning (p. 697).” The writing process used in this study works as follows:

I. PRE- WRITING-Students do various readings on interrelated themes. They freewrite (Elbow, 1998, 2000) in their reflexive journals or in their notebooks.

II. DRAFTING-Students write Draft 1 in answer to a question or set of questions. The questions require integration of the readings and class discussions as well as a reflection on some new element not discussed in class. The drafting stage takes the longest amount of time since most of the students at this level will write at least three drafts to effectively respond to teacher comments, questions and regarding the clarification of ideas, logic and coherence. These comments are written on their corrected drafts and then discussed individually at student-teacher conferences.

At the beginning, students are not burdened with grammar and vocabulary errors which might disappear or be transformed in later drafts. However, as soon as the draft is clear and coherent, grammar and vocabulary is marked.

III. REVISING-This stage concentrates on making changes congruent with evolving intentions. Therefore, in draft two or three, as ideas emerge and are clarified, we check for actions taken on the comments on previous drafts. The students should have incorporated the comments on structure and content in subsequent drafts. If draft two still has essay content and structure errors, the students must rewrite correcting them in draft three. If, on the other hand, draft two is clear and coherent, the student begins editing.

IV. EDITING-At this stage, grammar and vocabulary come into play. Now, students attend to a few specific errors that interfere with intelligibility. We know that not all errors will disappear in English 3003-04 writers, therefore, we decided to focus on selected grammatical errors that interfere with a clear message. The errors are enumerated and identified by the teacher (not corrected) on student drafts.

We have selected the following global errors (Krashen, 1986) that interfere with intelligibility: PROa (agreement error between pronoun and antecedent), PROf (incorrect pronoun form), Si (incomplete sentence), Sro (run-on sentence), Sm (subject missing), NEG (negative construction incorrect), Vf (error in verb form), ? (unclear), Wf (correct word, i.e. meaning, but incorrect form), Ww (wrong

word). In our conversation on grammar, we explain how global errors confuse the reader and make ideas hard to follow. The focus is on the writer's responsibility to the reader.

We do not mark local errors because even though they may distract the reader, they do not interfere with the message. Local errors are, for example, spelling, subject verb agreement and adjective placement, among others. Since local errors do not interfere with intelligibility (although they may be distracting—especially to English teachers!), we give priority only to these ten global errors at this stage of the process.

The second step in the editing stage is designed to have the students reflect upon their specific linguistic needs. They must first understand the errors marked by going over a correction guide which is given to them and a tally sheet with which they keep track of the number and type of errors committed. The tally sheet integrates metacognition, self-assessment, and empowerment. Grammar lessons are given at this stage so they can understand their errors and correct them in their final draft.

Grammar and vocabulary corrections are not made until the editing stage for many reasons. We want grammar to be at the service of ideas not ideas at the service of grammar. Also, grammar can kill their romance with their ideas and thereby kill the gratification inherent in the creative process. The meaningful organization of ideas takes precedence over orthographic correctness; this allows students to concentrate on their essay structure and content errors first and foremost. Since grammar and vocabulary will change in successive drafts there is no sense in investing time and effort in errors that may disappear. The emphasis of the writing process is on the process not the product. Although product is qualitatively better after the process, we concentrate on clear, logical thinking. Writing is not merely a form of evaluating the student but a powerful form of educating them.

During the year, we gave the students in class essay exams. They had to answer a question and support their position with relevant information from the class readings demonstrating an understanding and integration of the readings. The purpose of giving them in class exams was to measure their ability to write under the pressure of an exam situation which is a requisite not only of the course but of the university experience. At home, they can write and organize their ideas at their leisure. Unfortunately, a writer must often meet a deadline and therefore is unable to refine his/her material as he/she might want. As teachers, we must be sure the first draft, which is what can be produced during one class session, is a coherent and cohesive piece of writing. If this should prove true, we can feel confident that the student can independently go through the rest of the process and produce an essay intelligible to a native speaker of English.

Delia's progression through the writing process will be illustrated with her diagnostics of June, 1999 and May, 2000. She never received feedback from the teacher on these tests. These texts were given under strict time constraints—

only one hour and twenty minutes to read an essay and write an essay in answer to a specific question on content. These diagnostic tests show that through the writing process, and the class work of a year and a half, even the least skilled student made marked progress in essay structure and content. She begins expressing her ideas with clarity, logic, and coherence which reveal conceptual growth. However, her syntactic development was minimal. She ended the year unable to correct her global errors which interfered with intelligibility.

Delia

Delia read the essay “Judging Others” and answered the question: **According to the author of “Judging Others,” what makes people judge others incorrectly? Write an essay to explain the author’s ideas on this topic. Do you agree with the author? Explain your position.**

During the second semester, the students read short stories. This is Delia’s in class exam (draft 1) written under specific time constraints: one hour and twenty minutes for reading and writing.

The question: **Discuss the relationship between intention, action and outcome. Illustrate your discussion using ONE character from our readings.**

From a variety of readings, Delia selected the story “Space” by Mark Strand, *Fast Fiction: Creating Fiction in Five Minutes*, Roberta Allen Story Press, 1997. This story is about a young woman who is on the verge of jumping from the ledge of the apartment building. A young neighbor sees her and tries to stop her. The story evolves around the man’s unsuccessful attempts to convince the woman by seducing her not to jump.

Delias' pre and post tests:

Student Paper

The least skilled student

Diagnostic Pretest

June 2, 1999

The author explain with the people Judge incorrectly the other people. On the culture, language and the tradicional food. The author give the several example this problem. as the Judge incorrectly on the hair, food, culture, color of the eyes and race. The author's says. we may judge individuals incorrectly. Judge people from other cultures incorrectly.

my opinion is not debit Judge the person for the culture food, race, color for the eyes, and rich and poor. The person not Judge.

Student paper

Diagnostic Post -test

May 9, 2000

In this essay the author present various manner of judge to the person. Them are judging for as see for out and this not want so.

The person no wanted is judge for your color of eyes, neither wanted make your intelligence for this. Also the color of hair have that make to the person intelligent. Each person have an intelligent different. Too judge for the money and the occupation of each one.

The person are judge for your nacionality. Latin American, North American and Asiatic person are intelligent noone is better that the other, all are equal.

The Judge to the person for your color of eyes or hair, your money, occupation or nacionality, is bad and not wanted make. Each person have right to be as he to want. And the intelligent not have nothig that see with the other thing, only with your capacity for think. And not be of agree with the author.

Teacher Analysis

Even though Delia tries to answer the question she fails to discuss the concept of generalizations and prejudice. In terms of essay structure, Delia must extend her discussion over various paragraphs to fully develop her topic Delia should clarify the information, integrate in her discussion the two reasons presented by the author that make people judge others incorrectly, and organize the information into introduction, body and conclusion. Delia's linguistic skills are poor as evidenced by the grammatical errors on the pretest.

Teacher Analysis

Delia's diagnostic of May, improves in content as it focuses on the reading, integrates more information and has more breadth and depth. However, she still fails to discuss the concepts of generalizations and prejudice.

In terms of essay structure, Delia wrote an introductory, body paragraphs and a conclusion. We see an intention in refining her ideas. She must still learn to clarify ideas, use the vocabulary of the essay to refer to the concepts of generalizations and prejudice and to explain her disagreement with the author. Delia's syntactic development was minimal compared to her growth in essay structure and development of concepts.

Even though there is improvement if we compare the diagnostic of June and the following May, May's diagnostic is equivalent to a first draft. In view of this fact, a marked progress in clarity, logic, coherence and essay structure will not be evident unless the student's writing undergoes a process of revision and editing.

| DELIA'S ESSAY EXAM | TEACHER ANALYSIS |
|---|---|
| <p data-bbox="257 234 448 269" style="text-align: center;">February 22, 1999</p> <p data-bbox="218 286 492 321" style="text-align: center;">The Man and The Woman</p> <p data-bbox="145 347 548 494">This story is very sad because is of a woman suicide. But a man try of will to prevent. He make much thing for help to she as speak about the love and other things.</p> <p data-bbox="145 520 554 720">In the story "Space" the intention of the man is try to save the woman. Because the woman to wanted suicide for diverse reason. Reason that not to know. He not to know to the woman and not the important. He try of help, because the that she to want is bad.</p> <p data-bbox="145 746 560 1006">In the story the action was he speak with she for try to convince. Speak about of varied things. Things as of the love. He speak with she of the love that the have toward she, but that one was the first time that he see. Example of those is the part that he says "I'll marry you." THE man thing wish to get and puell her toward him."</p> <p data-bbox="145 1032 560 1241">The outcome is that all the that he make can not to avoid that she suicide. Not to be important the word that he says. This part explain this situation "he saw that between her feet and the ledge was a space, space that wuld always exist now between herself and the world."</p> <p data-bbox="145 1267 543 1414">The suicide not is a good manner of to resolve the problems. Always to owe speak with other person for give us an advice. Always to owe things before of make the things.</p> | <p data-bbox="582 234 996 442">Delia answer the question. She focuses her discussion on theman's intention,action and outcome. She is also demonstrating an understanding of the concepts raised in class. This essay gives evidence of an integration of new ideas (intention, action,outcome).</p> <p data-bbox="582 468 991 755">Comments made to her were to give evidence of the man's intention. Also,to explain why she thinks the man talks to thewoman about marriage, a trip, etc. Finally, she was told to revise the concluding paragraph to include the ideas of intention, action and result. Considering that this was an in class first draft written under time constraint, it is a well structure essay.</p> <p data-bbox="582 781 985 894">Some of her sentences are incomplete, the are fragments and the global errors interfere with intellligibility, therefor, her syntactic development was minimal.</p> |

This is Delia's final draft (draft 4) after refining the previous in class exam.

DELIA'S ESSAY EXAM

Final Draft
April 7, 2000

The Man and the Woman

The story "Space" is very sad because it is about of a woman to want suicide. But a man that unknown try of to prevent for that she not suicide. He make much thing for help to her as speak about the love and of other things.

In the story "Space" the intention of the man is try to save the woman. Because the woman to want to commit suicide for diverse reason. Reason that we not unknown. He unknown to the woman, but see that the life of she is in danger and he try to save. He try of help, because the that she to want is bad. Example of this part "He was no more than ten steps from the woman" and "The man shut his eyes and tried to think of how else to hange her mind".

In the story the action was he talk with her for try of convince. Talk about of varied things. Things as of a false love. He speak with her of a false love that he have toward her. And this was to an unknown woman. Example is "she was on the verge of jumping when a man, coming out on the roof to sunbathe"! The man to ask to her married for try of convince of not suicide. Example is "I'll marry your", "we'll do it immediately". And he promise a long trip for Italy. We'll go to Bologna". He wish in your mind to get the woman for that her not jumping. The Example is "He wished he could reach out and pull her toward him".

The outcome is that all the that he make can not to avoid that she to commit suicide. She not to be important the word that he says. This part explain this situation "he saw that between her feet and the ledge was a Space, a Space that would always exist now between herself and the world".

TEACHER ANALYSIS

Delia answers the question. She focuses her discussion on the man's intention, action and outcome. She is expressing herself with clarity, logic and coherence when she articulates and shares her ideas. She is also demonstrating an understanding of the concepts raised in class. This essay gives evidence of an integration of new ideas (intention, action, outcome).

Delia as an INGL 3004 student can write essays using the writing process. Her writing improves in content, organization, structure and mechanics. Even though Delia's qualitative growth is evident, her syntactic development lags behind. At the end of a year and a half, her writing contains a lot of global errors that interfere with intelligibility.

Delia's qualitative growth is evident when we compare her summer work with the second semester's Engl.3004 essays. Delia's linguistic skills, conceptual growth, her feelings, and ideas progressed at different rates. Essay writing promoted her ability to organize coherently, integrate and express her ideas as compared to her first draft in the summer of 1999. However, her linguistic skills have progressed, but not as far as anticipated. Despite the limited grammatical improvement, we find that writing provides scaffolding for both linguistic and cognitive growth. Therefore, a course limited only to skills development would be insufficient to adequately serve these low proficiency students.

The researchers have found writing to be the vehicle by which the creation of meaning is achieved. The writing process requires students to reflect, organize, refine and edit their work. This process gives them the opportunity to produce more thoughtful and coherent work which better reflects their new insights into the world. English in the College of General Studies, like all our courses, is learned for interpreting the world not just to get a better job.

Although many of these students ended the year unable to write a college level essay in English using the writing process, they did come much closer to this goal than if they were not required to ponder, write about and refine their ideas. Although much progress was made, it is evident that these students need more English instruction to enter into academic discourse in English. If the University of Puerto Rico is committed to offering these students, the children of the working class, a quality education, we strongly feel that a narrowly focused linguistic skills centered course would deny them the full university experience. Sentence level or paragraph writing may produce prescriptively correct usage but will not produce the sustained exploration of a topic, and the close examination of assumptions and implications, that brings higher level thinking into play. This first brush with academic writing sets the foundation for students to develop into college writers. To deprive the least proficient students the opportunity to write essays would be to ignore that our responsibility is to develop thinkers. Marginalizing them from academic discourse would be tantamount to offering them a second class education or, worse yet, a domesticating education.

Conclusion

This action research provides evidence that English 3003-04 students can indeed write essays using the writing process. By the end of the second semester, the essays produced were comprehensible to a non-Spanish reader. Students learned to integrate new information from class discussions and used the English language to express and share these ideas. Essay writing can help these students acquire, develop and consolidate their writing and thinking skills. Language and ideas are developed as students learn to read the world and act in it.

Delia's essays show a marked improvement in content, organization, structure and mechanics. Delia becomes capable of reading a question, organizing and integrating ideas from diverse sources and writing a coherent essay under specific

time constraints. Others in the group did advance to the level of intelligibility necessary for college level work. We used Delia, our least skilled student, in order to show the most difficult case, to emphasize how writing weaves everything together into a coherent whole.

Essay writing promotes conceptual and social growth. Delia's progressive drafts revealed an evolution in her grasp of the issues read about and discussed in class, as well as an ability to express her ideas. There is also evidence of feelings and ideas connected through the writing. Delia's Exam II on December 3, 1999 states she is becoming a better person and learning not to discriminate against others in society. This shows an understanding and integration of new ideas into her belief system as well as an effort to express these new ideas with clarity and coherence. On this same exam, she expresses a lifetime commitment to education.

From the researcher's analysis and reflections, it was concluded that many of these students ended the year unable to write college level essays in English. But, using the writing process they come much closer to this goal than if they had not been required to write essays. Sentence level or paragraph level compositions will not produce the same results. Writing during the first year course sets the foundation for students to develop into college writers. To deprive them of this experience would be to ignore their diverse needs. This treatment is necessary although insufficient. We feel another year of content based writing which integrates all linguistic skills would enable these students to do college level work satisfactorily. A course designed as this one, which is centered on creating meaning, not remediation, more effectively addresses CGS goals. The inter- and multi-disciplinary nature of CGS courses are the means to integration of knowledge, i.e. transdisciplinary thinking. To both teach English and honor our academic goals (linguistic, cognitive, affective, social), content tied English courses are indispensable. And, mechanisms for measuring these must also be designed.

For the writing process approach to work, teachers must have faith in their students' abilities. If a priori we decide that students at this level cannot write essays, we may be conjuring a self-fulfilling prophecy (Allport, 1979, p.125). If we expect students to write they will, if we expect them to fail, they also will. So, for this approach to work we must first of all have faith in our students' abilities. The writing process requires time for the students to reflect, organize, refine and edit their work. Given the time consuming opportunity to do all of this, students will produce more thoughtful and coherent essays thereby more faithfully expressing new insights into the world. We must wait on students' ideas by selecting readings and questions that will provide ample food for thought. Students must be served a varied menu to whet their appetites and cultivate their tongues.

References

- Allport, G. (1979). *The Nature of prejudice reading*. MA: Perseus.
- Barzun, J. (1991). *The Forgotten conditions of teaching and learning*. Chicago: Chicago University Press.
- Burkhalter, N. (1993). *How Persuasive writing aids critical thinking*. EDRS.ED 366 988, 1-25.
- Chomsky, N. (1957). *Syntactic Structures*. The Hague: Mouton.
- Creswell, J.W. (1998). *Qualitative inquiry research and design: Choosing among five traditions*. Thousand Oaks,CA: Sage.
- Dewey, J. (1966). *Democracy and Education*. NY: Free Press.
- Eisner, E. W. (1994). *Cognition and Curriculum Reconsidered*. NY: Teachers College Press.
- Elbow, P. (1998). *Writing With Power: Techniques for Mastering the Writing Process*. NY: Oxford University Press.
- Elbow, P. (2000). *Everyone Can Write: Essays Toward a Hopeful Theory of Writing and Teaching Writing*. NY: Oxford University Press.
- Finn, P. (1999). *Literacy With an Attitude: Educating Working Class Children In Their Own Best Interest*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Freire, P. (1993). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. NY: Continuum.
- Juhan, D. (1998). *Job's body*. Barrytown, NY: Barrytown Ltd.
- Krashen, S. (1982). *Principles and practice in second language acquisition*. Oxford: Pergamon Press.
- Mills, G. E. (2000). *Action research: A guide for the teacher researcher*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Merrill.
- Official Course Description. (1997). English 3003-3004, English Department, College of General Studies.
- Reconceptuación de Estudios Generales. (1999). Facultad de Estudios Generales. Universidad de Puerto Rico, Recinto de Río Piedras.
- Schumacher, E. F. (1973). *Small is beautiful*. NY: Harper and Row.
- Willis, P. (1993). *Learning to labour: how working class kids get working class jobs*. Hants, England: Ashgate.
- Zamel, V. (1987). Recent Research in Writing Pedagogy. *TESOL Quarterly*, 21, 697-715.