

Series Foreword

While the reading-writing connection may have been somewhat neglected of late (see Hirvela, 2004), the speaking-writing connection in both first and second language (L1, L2) circles has been ignored to a much greater degree. In L2 writing, the limited attention to the possible pedagogical value of the connectedness of oral and written discourse may be due to our eagerness to promote L2 writing as a legitimate field of study and practice in its own right, out from under the shadow of spoken language traditionally cast upon it by linguists interested in second language acquisition (SLA) (see Matsuda, 2001). But the separation of writing from speaking in L2 classrooms, as well as in L1 school settings, may also be the legacy of a respected body of research on the distance between orality and literacy (e.g., Halliday, 1989), as Hyland (2002) has pointed out. Hyland has argued that the distancing of speaking from writing, both theoretically and pedagogically, may actually be more harmful than helpful, as “the effectiveness of a written text does not depend on removing readers [interlocutors] from it, but on correctly identifying an audience and employing the communicative conventions to which they are most likely to respond” (p. 52).

Readers of Robert Weissberg’s contribution to our series will find in it a compelling argument for rethinking and, indeed, reclaiming the speaking-writing connection in L2 classrooms resonating with the case Hyland makes and going far beyond it. Weissberg reminds us that much SLA research points to the crucial role that genuine, meaningful communication—i.e., social interaction—plays in all language learning, including literacy. Weissberg also brings to the attention of L2 writing specialists the compelling arguments of Vygotsky and other

sociocultural theorists, whose work has not generally been well represented in the L2 writing literature but has been extremely influential in L1 literacy theory. What socioculturalists and other similar language theorists, such as Bakhtin, have to contribute, Weissberg notes, is insight into the foundational role that social interaction and resulting internalized talk, or inner speech, play in the development of the complex cognitive skills that we refer to as *writing*.

Weissberg, however, does much more than build arguments for linking speaking and writing in the L2 classroom. His book moves swiftly from theory to practice: showing us how developing concurrent oral-writing proficiencies can affect actual individual L2 learners, and telling us how synergistic dialogue-writing relationships can be fostered through writing tasks, group activities, conferencing, dialogue journals, and even teacher-written feedback. As an EAP (English for Academic Purposes) researcher who has extensively investigated speaking-writing relationships and a former director of an Intensive English Program, as well as a teacher of ESL students and TESOL teacher-trainees, Weissberg is able to offer the reader a richly theoretical and research-informed perspective on classroom practice in accessible prose, replete with vivid examples likely to be engaging for both pre- and in-service TESOL professionals. It seems highly probable that many readers of this book will be inspired to “socialize” their L2 composition classrooms and connect speaking and writing in ways they may have never before considered.

References

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