Essential Linguistics
What You Need to Know to Teach Reading, ESL, Spelling, Phonics, and Grammar

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INTRODUCTION

their students, both native English speakers and students learning English as an additional language, develop literacy.

Why Study Linguistics?

One very good reason for studying linguistics is that language is what makes us distinctly human. Lederer (1991) puts it in the strongest terms: “The birth of language is the dawn of humanity... before we had words, we were not human beings” (p. 3). Pinker (1994) writes that humans have a language instinct. Chomsky (1975) argues that language is innate, that it grows in the human mind the same way hair grows on our heads. Other linguists such as Halliday (1975) would debate whether or not language is innate and attribute a greater role to social forces in shaping language. But most linguists agree that language is uniquely human; it is what distinguishes us from other living creatures.

Human communication is qualitatively different from animal communication. A dog might be able to communicate to its owner (or to another dog) that she is hungry, but she can’t tell her master what she did yesterday or what she hopes to do tomorrow. However, the claim that only humans have language is debatable. It’s a topic students might want to investigate. Do dolphins or apes have language? How is their communication different from communication among humans? Is language what distinguishes humans from other creatures? Linguistics is the scientific study of language, and the study of linguistics gives teachers and students the tools to investigate questions like these.

A second reason for teachers to study linguistics is that the more they know about how language works, the more effectively they can use language to help their students learn. As Halliday (1981) writes, “A child doesn’t need to know any linguistics to use language to learn; but a teacher needs to know some linguistics if he wants to understand how the process takes place—or what is going wrong when it doesn’t” (p. 9). The greater a teacher’s understanding of basic language structures and processes, the easier it is for that teacher to make good decisions on tough topics like phonics, spelling, and grammar. A teacher with an active interest in language will arouse a similar interest in students, who may be surprised to find that hippopotamus means “river horse,” that the reason commas and periods go inside quotation marks is that typesetters didn’t want to lose those little pieces of punctuation as they laid out type for printing, and that the rule about not ending a sentence with a preposition was created in a period of history when teachers decided to try to base English grammar rules on Latin rules. The more teachers understand language, the more effectively they can help their students develop their knowledge of language.
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A third reason to study linguistics is that language study is interesting. Students are fascinated to discover that sandwiches got their name from the fourth earl of Sandwich, who spent his days (and nights) playing cards. He also loved to eat meat, but he didn’t want to get grease on the cards, so he wrapped the meat in bread, and the sandwich was born! Newspaper columns, radio shows, books, and Internet websites feature information about language. Richard Lederer’s books on language are best-sellers. Many of his lines (Why do we park in the driveway and drive on the parkway?) make their rounds on the Internet as friends forward emails with lists of interesting language tidbits. However, even though language is a fascinating topic, the only exposure many students get to language study during their elementary and secondary years is worksheets and exercises that bore them to tears and serve little practical purpose in improving their reading or writing. What students need is a new approach, and teachers who study linguistics can awaken students’ interest in language and engage them in linguistic investigations.

A fourth reason for studying linguistics is that a well-educated person should know something about language. Unfortunately, it is usually only when students study foreign languages that they begin to learn how their own language works. Language study should be introduced early in school, and the approach to language study should be scientific. This book is designed to help teachers build the knowledge they need to provide a scientific approach to language study for their students.

A final reason to study linguistics is that “the study of language is ultimately the study of the human mind” (Akmajian, Demers, et al. 1979, p. 5). Although linguists are interested in the structure and function of language, their goal in trying to understand how language works is to gain insights into how the human mind works. Even though scientists cannot examine the workings of the mind directly, they can study language, the unique product of human minds. Language reflects the inner workings of the mind. As Chomsky (1975) puts it, “language is a mirror of mind in a deep and significant sense. It is a product of human intelligence, created anew in each individual by operations that lie far beyond the reach of will or consciousness” (p. 4).

Three Aspects of Language Development

Halliday (1984) argues that we learn language, we learn through language, and we learn about language. Teachers armed with linguistics knowledge can help all their students learn language. Whether her students are six years old or twenty-six, whether they speak English as the native language or are learning English as an
additional language, a teacher is responsible to help all students develop their lan­
guage abilities. A first-grade teacher expands his students' language knowledge by
representing their experiences in writing during a language experience activity. A
middle school language arts teacher helps her students discover the organizational
structure of the short stories they read. A high school biology teacher shows her
students how to use contextual clues to understand new science vocabulary.
Teaching any subject involves teaching the language—the vocabulary and the or­
ganizational structures—common to that content area.

The second aspect of language development is learning through language. Go
into any classroom and what do you hear? The teacher is talking, the students are
talking, the room is full of talk. Why is this? It's because one way that humans learn
is through oral language. If you look around the classroom, you will also see writ­
ten language. There are books, lists on the board, student papers on the wall, and
words on the computer monitors. Everywhere you look, there is written language.
Students constantly learn through language, both oral and written, inside and out­
side classrooms. And teachers constantly teach their students through language.

Students also learn about language. Sometimes they learn that the language they
came to school speaking is not valued in the school setting. Sometimes they learn
how to make subjects and verbs agree. Or they may learn that when two vowels go
walking, the first one does the talking. Every day, students learn about language. In
classrooms this language study should be scientific. For example, students might
work together to discover why many English words end in a silent e and then de­
develop a rule for keeping or dropping the e before adding a suffix. This approach to
language study is most common in classes where the teacher has studied linguistics.
Such a teacher has his students engage in linguistic investigations following the
same approach that linguists use. A useful resource for teachers who want to involve
their students in language study is Goodman's book, Valuing Language Study: Inquiry
into Language for Elementary and Middle Schools (2003).

How Do Linguists Study Language?
We have said that linguistics is the scientific study of language. Linguists study
language in the same way that other scientists study their fields. Science always
starts with a question. For example, a linguist studying a new language might ask,
“What are the meaningful sounds in this language?” or “How do speakers of this
language structure sentences?” To investigate a question, a scientist forms a hy­
pothesis and collects data to test the hypothesis. The linguist’s goal is to describe
the new language.

Akmajian, Demers, and Harnish (1979) explain how a linguist studies lan­
guage scientifically. Several steps are involved in building a theory to describe a
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language. When a linguist attempts to describe a new language, the first step is to break the speech stream up into units. It's not hard for people to listen to another person who speaks their language and write down the words that person utters. The language is perceived as being divided into discrete units. But when one tries to determine the units in a language one doesn't speak or understand, the job of picking out meaningful units is a challenge. When we lived in Lithuania, we wanted to learn a few words of the language. However, as we listened to people speak, we had a very hard time deciding where one word ended and the next one began. We invite you to try this yourself with a language you don't speak. See if you can divide the language up into words. It's not easy because the physical speech stream is continuous. Speakers don't pause between words.

Let's imagine that the linguist has collected some data, and when she looks at her field notes, this is what she finds:

Does your new husband cook well

First, the linguist must decide how to divide up the stream into discrete units that occur in a sequential order. She might do this by trying to find repeated sequences. After considerable work, the linguist might hypothesize that in this language, the units are these:

Does your new husband cook well

The second task in describing a language is to figure out the differences among the units of speech. They don't all seem to be alike. This leads to forming a hypothesis about categories of words in the language. For example, in English words may be classified as nouns, verbs, conjunctions, and so on. Each of these labels represents a category. Working with this sentence, the linguist might categorize the units this way:

Does your new husband cook well

AUX DET ADJ N V ADV

She uses AUX for an auxiliary or helping verb and DET for a determiner, such as an article or a possessive pronoun.

The third step in describing a language is to decide how the speech units can be grouped together. For example, in this sentence, your new husband might be one group and does cook well might be another. The groups of words each play a specific role, so the fourth step would be to determine the function of each group. Here, your new husband serves as the subject of the sentence, and "does cook well" is the predicate.
The final step in describing this language would be to find what linguists call dependencies. In this sentence, does depends on your new husband. The subject and verb have to agree in number. If the subject were your new husbands, then the auxiliary verb would be do, the form used with plural subjects.

Readers shouldn't be worried if they are rusty on their auxiliary verbs, subjects, and predicates. This book doesn't include a test on parts of speech or the parts of a sentence. This example simply illustrates how linguists go about the scientific study of a language. They collect data and form hypotheses about the linguistic units, categories, groupings, functions, and dependencies. They use scientific methods to describe various aspects of a language. Of course, languages are very complex, and no linguist would claim to have described any language completely. Science is always work in progress.

How Do Schools Teach Students About Language?

In most elementary and secondary schools, language study is not approached from a scientific perspective. Linguists work to describe language so that they can study it. However, historically, grammar teachers have prescribed, not described. They have laid down the rules for students to learn and to follow. Teachers have told their classes that subjects and verbs must agree, and they have given students worksheets to practice this skill. Many students have learned that a noun is the name of a person, place, or thing, and they have underlined nouns in a set of sentences. Teachers of grammar, from the earliest days, have been prescriptive, not descriptive.

We want to encourage teachers to take a descriptive approach to language study because prescriptive approaches to natural phenomena like language simply don't work. The laws of physics ensure that if someone drops a pencil, it will fall to the ground, not fly up into the sky. This will occur no matter what rules about gravity great physicists proclaim. In the same way, prescriptive teachers can tell students not to split infinitives, but that won't inhibit a writer who wants "to boldly go" where no person has gone before. In fact, great writers seldom follow the rules in grammar books. In response to a critic who suggested that he rewrite a sentence to avoid ending it with a preposition, Winston Churchill is reputed to have commented, "This is the sort of nonsense up with which I will not put!"

An alternative to the teaching of grammar rules, one a teacher with some linguistic knowledge might choose, would be to involve students in linguistic investigations. For example, students might examine books written by well-known writers to see if they ever end sentences with prepositions. Students could collect examples of such sentences and discuss how each sentence would sound if it were
rewritten so that the preposition came earlier. In the course of this investigation, students would need to learn to distinguish between a preposition (He ran up a big hill) and a particle (He ran up a big bill). They might even discover that what Churchill’s critic objected to was a final particle, not a preposition after all.

When teachers understand basic linguistic concepts, they can make informed decisions about how to teach language to their students. Knowledgeable teachers can teach their students about language using a descriptive approach. They also have the knowledge base to determine how to approach topics like phonics, vocabulary, and spelling. We encourage teachers to explore topics in linguistics with their students. We have organized this book to provide the essential linguistics teachers need to boldly go where many teachers have not gone before.

**Organization of This Book**

One goal for this book is to provide teachers with the linguistics concepts they need to help their students become more proficient in their use of both oral and written language. A second goal is to suggest ways that teachers can help their students to take a scientific approach to learning about language, to conduct linguistic inquiry. The two goals are related. Students who investigate how language works can apply insights from their study to their own reading, writing, and oral language development.

To help teachers apply what they are learning about linguistics to their classroom practice, we begin this book with a chapter on first language acquisition. In Chapter 1 we consider how researchers from different fields of study have approached the topic of language acquisition. Chapter 2 extends the discussion to the acquisition of second and written languages. We argue that people acquire a second language or written language in the same way that they acquire a first language. The following chapters examine different aspects of language.

Chapter 3 looks at the sound system of English. We explain what phonemes are and describe the English phonological system. With the increased emphasis on phonemic awareness and phonics, it is important for teachers to develop a thorough understanding of English phonology in order to make informed decisions about the best way to teach reading. For that reason, in Chapter 4 we consider the implications from phonology for teaching reading and teaching a second language.

Chapter 5 traces the history of writing development and describes the system of English orthography. Teachers with a good knowledge of orthography can better decide how to help their students with spelling. Chapter 6 examines phonics and graphophonics. Phonics rules attempt to state the relationships between
Even though researchers debate whether language is innate or whether humans have a special cognitive capacity for language, most researchers agree that children acquire their first language. They do this rapidly and without formal instruction. It appears that children don't have to be taught language the way they are taught to button a shirt. But what about written language? Can children acquire written language in the same way they acquire oral language? There are clear differences between oral language and written language. As Halliday and Hassan (1989) have shown, what appears in a book is not simply oral language written down. Written language contains a different kind of vocabulary and different grammatical structures than oral language.

Questions also arise over whether second languages can be acquired, especially by older students. Once a person has developed one language, can that person develop a second language in the same way as the first? Older second language learners often struggle, especially with pronunciation. Most students who study a second or foreign language in high school or college fail to develop a high degree of proficiency in the language. Is that because of the methods used to teach language, or is it because people acquire a first language and then learn subsequent languages in the same way they learn other subjects in school?

In this chapter we address these questions. Insights from linguistics suggest that both written and second languages can be acquired rather than learned. This has important implications for teaching because the role of the teacher is quite different in an acquisition classroom than in a learning classroom.
Written Language

There is a debate over whether written language is learned or acquired. The question is "Is the ability to develop written language proficiency an innate property of the brain, or do people learn to read in the same way that they learn other things, through a cognitive process that involves hypothesis testing?" As we discussed earlier, most researchers agree that humans have a special capacity for oral language development, and much of the debate is over how much of language is built in and how much is learned. But the proposition that humans may also have an innate ability to acquire written language is more controversial. Some researchers claim that written language is not natural language but a secondary representation of language that the brain is not prepared to acquire. Others hold that written language can be acquired in the same way as oral language or sign language because people have an innate ability for making meaning, and they can do this with different language systems. The question of whether written language is acquired or learned is not merely academic. A teacher's belief about how written language is developed helps determine how he will teach reading and writing.

Two Views of Reading

There is little disagreement that reading success is the key to academic achievement. However, there is a great deal of disagreement about what the reading process consists of and how children should be taught to read. Two current views of reading correspond to the distinction between learning and acquisition. We refer to these two views as a word recognition view and a sociopsycholinguistic view. The word recognition view is consistent with the belief that written language must be learned. In contrast, the sociopsycholinguistic view is consistent with the claim that the ability to use written language is to some degree innate and can be acquired.

Those who hold a word recognition view believe that the main task during reading is to identify words. Readers learn a set of skills that allows them to make a connection between the black marks on the page and words in their oral vocabulary. Teaching reading involves helping students develop the necessary skills to make this connection. For example, students might learn to sound out letters and then blend the sounds to pronounce and identify words. Once students decode printed words, they recognize them as words in their oral language. Readers combine the meanings of individual words to make sense of what they read.

The sociopsycholinguistic view, on the other hand, emphasizes that reading is a process of constructing meaning. Readers use their background knowledge and cues from three linguistic systems to make sense of texts. This theory holds that readers acquire literacy in the same way they acquire oral language, by
focusing on meaning. Krashen (1993, 1999) argues that people acquire the ability to read and write in the same way they acquire a first or second language, by receiving messages they understand. When people read texts that are comprehensible and interesting, they become more proficient readers and writers. Teachers make written language comprehensible when they read to students from big books with illustrations or have students read familiar songs or engaging poetry. As students follow along, they begin to make connections between the oral reading and the print. Eventually, they acquire enough knowledge of written language to read independently. Figure 2–1 contrasts these two views of reading.

Both those who hold a word recognition view and those who hold a sociopsycholinguistic view would probably agree that good readers comprehend texts. The two views might be seen simply as different routes to this common end. However, these different routes translate into very different classroom practices. As Figure 2–1 shows, they involve different goals and different methods of teaching as well as different classroom reading activities. In the next sections we discuss these differences briefly. Then in the chapters that follow, we explain in more detail the linguistic concepts that underlie each aspect of reading. Evidence from linguistics lends strong support to a sociopsycholinguistic model of reading.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word Recognition View</th>
<th>Sociopsycholinguistic View</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Goal: Identify words to get to the meaning of a text</td>
<td>Goal: Use background knowledge and cues from three language systems to construct meaning from a text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Method: Use phonics rules to sound out words and learn a set of sight words to identify words that do not follow phonics rules</td>
<td>Method: Use graphophonics as just one of three language cueing systems to gain meaning from a text</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learn to break words into parts to identify them</td>
<td>Study word parts only during linguistics investigations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom activity: Learn vocabulary in advance of reading</td>
<td>Classroom activity: Read to acquire vocabulary by encountering words in context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read orally so the teacher can help students learn to identify words and can supply words students don’t know</td>
<td>Read silently using the strategies the teacher has helped students internalize to construct meaning from a text</td>
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</table>

Figure 2–1. Two views of reading
Goal: Word Recognition

The goal for a teacher who takes a word recognition view of reading is to help students learn to identify words. Word identification involves recoding the marks on the paper into words readers already know in their oral vocabulary and then combining the meanings of individual words to get at the meaning of the text. The assumption is that any word a student can pronounce is a word the student can understand. Following Goodman (1996), we refer to this process of identifying words as recoding rather than decoding. Recoding involves changing from one code to another. In this case, readers change written language into oral language. Decoding, in contrast, involves getting at the meaning. Spies decode secret messages, they don't simply recode them.

There is a possibility with recoding that readers may change written language to oral language without ever getting at the meaning. For example, many students who begin to study linguistics can pronounce the word *morphophonemic*. They can recode this word from written to oral form. However, these students can't decode the word because they don't know what the word means. Even though there is an assumption that word recognition will lead to meaning construction, there is a danger that students will simply learn to say the words without knowing what they mean. This is most likely to occur with English language learners.

Goal: Sociopsycholinguistics

The goal of reading from a sociopsycholinguistic perspective is to construct meaning. Readers are focused on making meaning, not on identifying the individual words. To construct meaning, readers use their background knowledge and cues from three linguistic systems: graphophonics, syntax, and semantics. They go through a process of sampling the text, predicting what will come next, filling in unstated information by inferring, confirming or disconfirming their predictions, and integrating the new information with what they already know. This process occurs rapidly. Readers combine cues from the text with their own knowledge of the world to make sense of what they are reading. Every text has a certain meaning potential, but different readers construct different meanings depending on their background knowledge and their purpose for reading. However, the goal is always to construct meaning.

Method: Word Recognition

If the goal of reading is to recognize written marks through a process of recoding a text, then readers can use several methods to do this. One is learning phonics
rules. By applying phonics rules, readers can determine the pronunciation of a string of letters and change the written marks to words in their oral vocabulary. Phonics is the primary tool for word identification. Some common words such as the and of, however, do not follow regular phonics rules, so readers also need to develop a set of sight words. These are words students recognize automatically. Teachers might use flash cards to help students develop their sight words. The teacher shows a card, and students say the word.

For longer, more complex words, phonics rules do not work well, especially for English. Students can identify longer words by breaking them down into their component parts. For example, they can divide a word into its prefix, root, and suffix. Students can combine the meanings of word parts to determine the meaning of a long word like transportation or reconceptualize. Teachers sometimes tell students to find the little words inside the big word. This approach to word recognition is called structural analysis.

**Method: Sociopsycholinguistics**

If the goal of reading is to construct meaning, then readers should use all available information, including background knowledge and cues from all three cueing systems. The graphophonic system is just one source of information readers can use. Rather than being the principal means of identifying words, the letters and sounds serve as an important source of information to be combined with information from other sources. Proficient readers learn to sample the visual display and to use visual and sound information as they make and confirm predictions. However, they also use their background knowledge and cues from the syntax and semantics of the written language.

Readers may make use of their knowledge of word parts to construct meaning. However, there are limits on the usefulness of this knowledge. Although studying words is an important part of the language arts curriculum, especially if the word study is undertaken from a linguistic perspective, the ability to break words into component parts and use that information to help construct meaning has only limited value during normal reading. If a student is taking a vocabulary test, knowledge of prefixes and suffixes can help in choosing from a list of possible meanings. However, in the same way that the meaning of a sentence can’t easily be determined by combining the meanings of individual words, the meaning of a word can’t easily or reliably be determined by combining the meanings of the component parts. For example, it is difficult to decide on the meaning of a word like transportation by combining the meanings of its parts: across + carry + state of. Studying word parts can be fascinating, but it may not be too useful for determining the meaning of a word during actual reading.
Classroom Practices: Word Recognition

Beliefs about reading lead naturally to instructional practices. In word recognition classes, teachers often preteach words that they think students may not be able to figure out using phonics, sight word skills, or structural analysis. In some cases, teachers may preteach vocabulary that they think is not part of their students’ oral vocabulary. Although it is difficult to decide which words most of the students will not know, teachers who have a word recognition view of reading attempt to help students with words that many of them might not know so that when they encounter those words during reading they will be able to recognize them. Preteaching often consists of defining words for students or giving students a list of words and having them look the words up and write definitions.

Another classroom practice consistent with a word recognition view is to have students read aloud on a regular basis and help students with difficult words. During round-robin reading, teachers or other students usually correct students if they mispronounce a word. They also supply words when the reader does not recognize them. The belief is that giving a student the word helps the student learn that word.

Classroom Practices: Sociopsycholinguistics

The approach to vocabulary from a sociopsycholinguistic view is to have students read extensively so that they can acquire vocabulary as they encounter words in a variety of contexts. When vocabulary is pretaught, students might learn a definition for the word, but knowing a word involves much more than that. By seeing the word several times in slightly different contexts, students can figure out its properties, including what endings it can take (its morphology), what role it plays in the sentence (its syntax), whether it is formal or informal (its pragmatics), along with its meaning (its semantics). Students acquire this information in the process of reading.

In classes in which teachers have a sociopsycholinguistic view of reading, most reading is done silently. Reading aloud is reserved for activities such as readers theatre. For that reason, teachers help students develop strategies to use during silent reading. These strategies are designed to improve comprehension. Teachers often talk with students about different things they can do if they come to a part of a text that they don’t understand. Students need a variety of strategies that they can use flexibly to construct meaning. The goal of this instruction is to improve students’ abilities to develop higher levels of reading proficiency.

The goals, methods, and classroom practices of teachers with these two views of reading differ. As a result, the way students develop reading proficiency in these
two kinds of classes also varies. The two views have very practical consequences. In subsequent chapters, we will look closely at the phonology, orthography, morphology, and syntax of English. As teachers better understand these linguistic systems, they can make more informed decisions about which view of reading to adopt and how to go about helping all their students become proficient readers.

Two Views of Writing

In the same way that there are two views of reading, there are also two views of writing. These two views again correspond to the distinction we have made between learning and acquisition. From a learning point of view, writing, like reading, must be taught directly. From an acquisition perspective, writing, like speaking, is a form of output that reflects the language competence an individual has acquired. Teachers from both points of view include writing in their language arts curriculum, but several aspects of their instruction are different. Figure 2–2 shows these two views of writing.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning View: Traditional Writing Classroom</th>
<th>Acquisition View: Process Writing Classroom</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Goal</strong>: Learn how to produce a good piece of writing</td>
<td><strong>Goal</strong>: Produce good writing and acquire knowledge of the writing process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Method</strong>: Begin with the parts and build up to writing a whole text</td>
<td><strong>Method</strong>: Begin with a message and develop the skills needed to produce the message</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher directly instructs students in how to form letters, then words, then how to combine words into sentences, and then sentences into paragraphs</td>
<td>Teacher creates conditions for authentic written responses and then helps students express themselves in writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Approach to correctness</strong>: Writing product must be conventional from the beginning</td>
<td><strong>Approach to correctness</strong>: Writing moves naturally from invention to convention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The teacher corrects each piece of writing</td>
<td>Classmates and others, including the teacher, respond to drafts</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2–2. Two approaches to the teaching of writing
Figure 2–2 is adapted from an earlier book, Teaching Reading and Writing in Spanish in the Bilingual Classroom (Freeman and Freeman 1996, 1998b), in which we describe in detail how writing develops in both Spanish and English when teachers use a process approach. Here, we briefly describe the major differences between a learning and an acquisition approach to teaching writing.

**Goals and Methods: Traditional Classroom**

In a traditional class, teachers want students to be able to produce a good story, report, or other piece of writing. To accomplish this goal, teachers break writing down into its component parts and teach each one. For example, teachers of young children show them how to form letters. Students learn to write words, sentences, paragraphs, and then whole stories or reports. In many traditional classes, students learn how to produce a five-paragraph essay that follows a clearly defined structure. Usually, students are given the topics for writing, and they are expected to complete the writing in a fairly short time. This approach can help students perform well on typical tests of writing.

**Goals and Methods: Process Classroom**

One goal in a process writing class is the production of good pieces of writing. However, teachers also want students to internalize the process involved. This includes choosing a topic, writing drafts, conferencing to get feedback on the writing, doing final editing, and sharing the finished piece with others. Teachers provide many opportunities for students to produce different kinds of writing—a story, a letter to a friend, a list of books they have read. Rather than giving students topics, teachers help students understand that there are many situations in which they can express their ideas most effectively by using written language. For example, students who investigate a topic during a theme study might accompany their oral report with a written handout for classmates.

Teachers set aside time on a regular basis for writing. During writers workshop they teach minilessons to help students express their ideas more effectively. Teachers who take an acquisition view realize that students must read frequently. The reading provides the input needed for written output. As they read, students come to understand the different organizational structures writers use to communicate ideas.

**Approach to Correctness: Traditional Classroom**

Teachers in traditional classrooms emphasize the importance of producing writing that follows conventions in handwriting, spelling, punctuation, and organization. Often, handwriting and spelling are major components of the writing program. Students memorize lists of words and are tested each week on their spelling words.
To help students learn to produce correct writing, teachers correct each piece a student writes. In many traditional classes, the form of the writing becomes much more important than the content. Students who focus on form may not even try to use new words for fear of misspelling them.

**Approach to Correctness: Process Classroom**

Process writing teachers believe that writing will move from individual invention to conventional forms. For example, students may begin by spelling most words the way they sound. Over time, they begin to produce more conventional spellings. Teachers help students keep the focus on the content of what they are writing, not just the form. At the same time, as writers share their writing with classmates and the teacher, they realize that some ways of spelling words or punctuating sentences confuse their audience, so they start to use more conventional forms to communicate more effectively. When students have written something they want others to read, they are motivated to put their writing in a form that follows social conventions. Teachers give minilessons on all areas of writing, including spelling and punctuation. Rather than giving students lists of words to memorize, they help them discover the patterns in the spellings of English words. Conventional writing is a goal of a process classroom, but teachers emphasize that the content of the message is more important than the form.

**The Reading and Writing Connection from an Acquisition View**

A teacher's view of whether written language is learned or acquired determines, to a great extent, the classroom practices the teacher follows. If teachers believe that reading and writing are learned, they divide the skills into their component parts and teach each of the parts directly and systematically. Reading is accomplished by recognizing words, so teachers teach phonics rules, sight words, and structural analysis. Writing consists of producing words, so teachers focus on handwriting, spelling, punctuation, grammar, and conventional organizational forms, such as the five-paragraph essay.

When teachers view reading and writing from an acquisition standpoint, they do a number of things to make written language comprehensible. They read to and with students and teach students strategies they can use to comprehend texts. They believe that written language, like oral language, develops best when students focus on the message, not the form. They recognize that reading provides the input needed for writing output. They provide many opportunities for students to produce and share their writing. They help students understand all the steps involved in the writing process.
From an acquisition standpoint, reading and writing are closely related. Students acquire much of their ability to write by reading. However, writing and talking about what they have written play an important role in students' writing development. Brown and Cambourne (1987) describe a method teachers can use to help students become more proficient in reading and writing. This method is called read and retell. Students read a number of articles or stories from a single genre. For example, they might read several different fairy tales over time. After reading a short fairy tale, they would turn the paper over and do a written retelling. Then, working in pairs or small groups, they would share and compare their retellings.

Brown and Cambourne found that many of the features from the readings showed up in the children's writing. Not only did children use some of the same phrasing and vocabulary, but they also used punctuation and spellings they had never used before. Brown and Cambourne refer to this effect as direct spillover. When they interviewed the children, they discovered that this inclusion of text features was not conscious. Children were focused on representing the meaning of the story, and in the process they used several of the text features. In fact, these features also showed up in other writing much later, a phenomenon the authors call delayed spillover.

Brown and Cambourne conclude that spillover is the result of the retelling process. They write, "The retelling procedure, as we define it, coerces learners to bring to their conscious awareness many features of text structure on which they would not typically focus, or upon which they would not typically reflect" (p. 27). Doing a written retelling and discussing how one retelling is similar to or different from another helped these students internalize features of written text that they later used. This suggests that while input from reading is necessary for students to acquire written language, output in the form of writing and talking brings some aspects of written language to the conscious level and enables students to use these features later. Teachers in an acquisition class may not directly teach spelling and vocabulary, but they plan activities such as read and retell that require students to focus on language forms as part of a meaningful language activity.

Teachers who take an acquisition view of reading and writing have different goals, use different methods, and respond to errors differently from teachers who take a learning view. In the same way, teachers who adopt an acquisition view of second or foreign language teaching approach their task differently from teachers who believe that a second or foreign language must be learned.

Two Views of Second or Foreign Language Development
In the same way that there are two views of how people develop literacy, there are also two views of how people develop a second or foreign language. One view is that