

PREFACE

ERIC ESPÉRET

University of Poitiers, France

Denis Alamargot and Lucile Chanquoy's book offers a vivid and original presentation of main trends in the research field devoted to writing. First, it provides both young and senior scientists with a comparative view of current theoretical models of composition, with different levels of reading made available: each element of these models is clearly situated in its historical context, and scrutinized in its further evolution. Second, this well documented theoretical analysis of writing mechanisms is checked against empirical data extracted from a lot of updated experimental studies; and lack of necessary data is thought to be underlined and defined when noted.

Following the usual description of writing phases initially proposed by Hayes and Flower, the first part of this book presents planning, translating and revision processes and compares them to other researchers' conceptions (from Bereiter and Scardamalia, to Kellogg or Galbraith). Such presentations of isolated models do exist in literature; but the present work really gives a good *comparative* analysis of components inside each of models, in a clear and cumulative way; a fine-grained observation of differences between similarly-looking models is also performed.

Such an overview allows us to note a strong evolution in conception and modelisation of writing activity: mainly descriptive and general at the beginning, models become more and more functional, often more local, and try to define exact sub-processes they comprise (for example, sub-processes of revising) and the relationships linking these elements. They also take more and more into account cognitive costs implied in managing such a complex activity, as well as individual differences and developmental or environmental aspects. New global theoretical conceptions are progressively invoked: connectionist or modularist views, for instance. Besides, more and more experimental works are led in this field, because of an higher precision of models. Strict psycholinguistic aspects nevertheless remain the poor relation in these approaches. All issues are questioned by authors caring of precision and rigor.

The second part is entirely devoted to the cognitive functioning of writing. Decisive issues are thus examined: are there sequential or parallel processes? How many cognitive resources do they consume? Does there exist a specific control structure managing different processes?

A particular chapter is devoted to a central component of most cognitive system described in literature, Working Memory, whose role is not usually analyzed in classical models of writing. A recent version of this approach, Kellogg's one, puts for-

ward the idea that the three classical writing processes are linked to the bringing to bear of the three components in Baddeley's model of Working Memory. The last chapter, very interesting, is about expertise. It allows us to differentiate developing capacity with age and acquisition (or learning) of writing with practice. Such a differentiation is performed by analyzing evolution of each sub-process and checking contributions from different developmental models (including neo-piagetian ones). And we cannot evade the final question: does really exist a developmental model of writing? Is it possible to get a model similar to those produced about spoken language, for which a social institutionalized learning does not exist? While different possible models are carefully examined, the authors are always keeping in mind the necessity of never forgetting functional aspects in change.

To conclude this fine presentation, in an interesting way, two prominent researchers in this field, John R. Hayes and Ronald T. Kellogg, have been invited to react to analyses developed in the book and to complete the presentation of their own model.

At last, this book is pleasant to read, useful to people working in teaching of writing or studying this specific human activity; it has to be included in students' lists of references.



<http://www.springer.com/978-0-7923-7159-5>

Through the Models of Writing

Alamargot, D.; Chanquoy, L.

2001, VIII, 269 p., Softcover

ISBN: 978-0-7923-7159-5