

## Writing Strategies: A Student-Centered Approach Book Two: Advanced

Book Information: David Kehe and Peggy D. Kehe.  
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Kehe and Kehe clearly intend their two-book series for college-level academic writing to be student-centred. They propose an alternative to the tradition of teacher-centred writing classes with the activities in this two-book set. These two texts were designed for use in yearlong writing courses in the United States, but can be used effectively in Japan as well.

Book Two focuses on expository writing modes with chapters on process, cause and effect, extended definition, and argumentation. The four modes are introduced using the same sequence beginning with examining the unique features of each mode, and moving through exercises to guide students in writing an essay in three drafts.

There are two supplementary sections, one for summary/fluency writing, and another for reviewing grammar trouble spots. The sample five-day lesson plan provided in the Teacher's Guide was quite helpful to begin planning. I knew that I would not be able to complete all four expository writing modes meeting students for only 90 minutes each week, so I selected two to concentrate on (extended definition and argumentation). I then divided each of the mode sections so that students basically wrote or revised something each week and completed each section within six or seven weeks. With less motivated students, teachers will likely be forced to make some major adaptations to the material.

We began, as the sample lesson plan suggests, with one of the eight fluency-writing activities. These are done in either pairs or groups of three. This is one of the ways that the authors have designed Writing Strategies to be student-centred. Each unit is a short jigsaw activity of an interesting news article. For example, in Fluency Writing 1, Student A reads the first paragraph of the article Removing Tattoos and at the end checks her/his partner's comprehension by asking a supplied comprehension check question provided in bold type at the end of each paragraph. The partner(s) know that at the end they will be asked

questions about the content and so must listen carefully. When Student A has finished, Student B continues with part two of the article and so on. Once all parts have been read and questions answered, students go on to the writing exercise. They are directed to write a paragraph with as many details as possible about the entire article without re-reading it. They cannot look at the article again. Instead they are directed to use only their recollections and the list of key words and phrases provided.

I started lessons with pairs or small groups of students either peer editing/discussing essay drafts (see Rollinson, 2005) or checking answers for one of the assigned grammar exercises. There are good examples in the book illustrating how to ask for a peer's advice about writing. Throughout the book, the authors have flagged appropriate places where teachers might assign a particular grammar review exercise. Also, seven grammar exercises are designed for group work requiring speaking and listening, in addition to reading, writing and thinking. I found this a productive and student-centered way to begin some lessons.

The book is filled with examples of essay development, beginning with organization, through first, second, and final drafts. Students are supposed to complete the exercises with a minimum of orchestration by the teacher. Since this text is for advanced-level learners, Kehe and Kehe imagine the teacher as a facilitator dealing with individual questions. They recommend that teachers try to do as much checking of student writing as they can in the classroom. With my Japanese learners, I probably offered more explanation and guidance than the authors might do in their US-based classes.

I found this book to be a refreshing departure from the standard writing text. The topics covered are sometimes challenging though, given that ESL learners appear to be the target audience. However, my advanced-level learners did not struggle excessively with the content. The selected modes are essential for advanced-level college students to practice and they are given ample models of good organization and writing to help them, despite several typos. In addition, the Teacher's Guide has very useful checklists for students to use when preparing their final drafts, as well as evaluation forms teachers can use for each mode.

I concur with Yasuda's recent conclusion that Japanese English learners could become better writers through training in specific strategies about how to write and how to revise (2005, p. 157). The self-access and interactional style of Writing Strategies 2 appeal to me, as does the scaffolded practice offered to assist novice writers through activities with varying degrees of control.

This text was written for more intensive courses in the United States so teachers in Japan will need to adapt the material for their students. But I do recommend teachers of advanced writing courses here in Japan to consider using it.

References Rollinson, P. (2005). Using peer feedback in ESL writing classes. *ELT Journal*, 59(1), 23-30. Yasuda, S. (2005). Different activities in the same task: An activity theory approach to ESL students f writing process. *JALT Journal*, 27(2), 139-168.

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