

ASSESSMENT MODULE

FINAL TEST

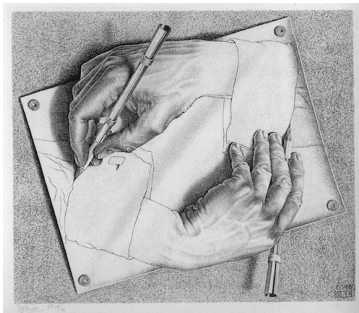
Name: Andrés Melo Cousineau

Date: December 3, 2014

Teacher: Danielle Freitas

CLB Level: Benchmark 8; WRITING: IV. Comprehending/Sharing Information.

Skill- Writing



Assumptions/Context: Students are at the end of a course emphasizing the writing skill. During the whole course students have: 1) come to learn about drafting and rewriting extensively; 2) they are also accustomed by now to the usual symbols used in providing “corrective” feedback in writing (a sample is provided at the end of this exercise); and finally, very importantly, 3) understand that self-assessment is specially key to improving one’s writing abilities. (An example of the kind of text that could have been used as part of such a course is the older, but still good: **Writing Clearly; an Editing Guide**, Lane and Lange).

All students have a **portfolio** in which their progression has been tracked; it consists of all their writings. In this regard, the course has been **learner-centered** and the portfolio allows students to keep track of the progress by looking at multiple written examples (resumes, letters, emails ...). Some students have actually shown great interest in entering an EAP class. It is the second to last day of the course, and the teacher decided to do a final exam. The students knew about the exam a week in advance. No surprises.

The Test: Students will write a 4-5 paragraphs in which they will try to answer the questions: **“How does writing make us free? What are its advantages? Can writing make us prisoners? What are its disadvantages?”**. The Teacher writes the questions on the blackboard. Now, students LISTEN to a very short poem by an

illiterate person who is learning to write. Repeat the poem slowly at least 3 times. The poem reads:

"I am not free
I am not free when I walk,
When I go to the bank,
When I go to the restaurant,
I am not free
When I go to the Laundromat,
When I go for an application,
When I go for a job,
I am not free
Because I can't read and write

(by Cennick, in **Freedom to me**, Literacy Ontario; module from TESL Course)

(NOTE: as an **optional** element, depending on the level of students, they could ALSO be asked to READ and incorporate in their answer, the following quote on writing:

"Writing is a way to end up thinking something you couldn't have started out thinking. Writing is, in fact, a transaction with words whereby you free yourself from what you presently think, feel and perceive. You make available to yourself something better than what you'd be stuck with if you'd actually succeeded in making your meaning clear at the start." (Brown, Douglas: **Teaching by Principles**, quoting Elbow (1973), p. 337.)

Students will be given 1 hour 30 minutes for the whole exercise. They will have 30 minutes to draft and 1 hour to write their response. They will be allowed to use a Thesaurus and look at any notes from their portfolio.

Students should: 1) present the advantages of writing, 2) present the disadvantages of writing, 3) state their own position by giving their concluding opinion.

Students will be assessed primarily on: 1) the **coherence** of the text, the level of success in terms of making meaning comprehensible and powerful; that is to say, having the words come alive; and, 2) the **cohesion** of the text, the level of success at interconnecting the "skeleton" of the surface text itself: for example, a) use of anaphoric items that provide clear relation of text words to antecedents (pronouns), b) use of discourse connectors/devices (although, however, ...), and finally, c) rhetorical strategists (e.g., parallelism, purposeful repetition, ...) The teacher will use the IELTS writing rubrics as a guide (see below) and will focus primarily on cohesion and coherence, which are the mark of more advanced writing skills.

Analysis of Test

Type of Test – This is a **Summative** or Final exam because it is meant to evaluate student learning at the **end** of an instructional period and compared against a standard/benchmark. It is more traditional, timed, and done “in one sitting”, so to speak. However, since students have been developing their own portfolio, this exam will ALSO be part of that kind of assessment which is **Formative** in nature. By providing examples of both types the teacher assures a better-prepared student.

Approach of measurement used: This is a **Direct Approach** since it is measuring learners’ overall writing ability (can the student use discourse connectors?, organize ideas in paragraphs?, ...) It is partly **Integrative** because it also involves LISTENING to a simple poem at the beginning. (It would be even more integrative if the teacher decides to add the reading section as well). It resembles the new integrative sections for writing that are part of the TOEFL exam. The test is **Performance Based** because the questions are open-ended, not fixed (i.e. multiple choice). It is engaging to students because it gives them the opportunity to reflect about what they have been doing for a month! They are writing about writing. Finally, this exam is **criterion-referenced** because the concern is not to find out the percentile to which the student belongs (this would be norm-referenced). Instead, satisfactory performance is related to what the individual students can actually do with the language (criterion-referenced).

Scoring Method – Scoring writing is always a tricky thing. Students will be given their tests back with the usual symbols for self-correction; in this regard this scoring method is quite **objective**. However, the teacher will make sure to write overall impressions on the improvement of coherence and cohesion from the beginning of the course to this final exam, this might lean more towards the **subjective** side depending on many factors. Among these factors one finds the actual ability of the teacher him/herself to write! Probably a Nobel Laureate would be absolutely objective, but a teacher who did not write much could simply follow a very strict model that would not get many important aspects of writing. An example of this are the diverse cultural modes of presenting an argument or an idea. Some cultures write more in a kind of straight line (English), but others write more in a spiral fashion, or even a zigzag formation (See Brown, Figure, 19.1, p. 337) Of course, if the student wishes to enter University, the teacher must emphasize that the linear mode of writing must be followed to the detriment of the others. Finally, to ensure further objectivity, the teacher follows the guidelines set up in the rubrics for the IELTS written section (or similar), focusing on the column “Coherence and Cohesion”:

IELTS TASK 2 Writing band descriptors (public version)

Band	Task Achievement	Coherence and Cohesion	Lexical Resource	Grammatical Range and Accuracy
9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> fully addresses all parts of the task presents a fully developed position in answer to the question with relevant, fully extended and well supported ideas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses cohesion in such a way that it attracts no attention skillfully manages paragraphing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses a wide range of vocabulary with very natural and sophisticated control of lexical features; rare minor errors occur only as 'slips' 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses a wide range of structures with full flexibility and accuracy; rare minor errors occur only as 'slips'
8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> sufficiently addresses all parts of the task presents a well-developed response to the question with relevant, extended and supported ideas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> sequences information and ideas logically manages all aspects of cohesion well uses paragraphing sufficiently and appropriately 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses a wide range of vocabulary fluently and flexibly to convey precise meanings skillfully uses uncommon lexical items but there may be occasional inaccuracies in word choice and collocation produces rare errors in spelling and/or word formation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses a wide range of structures the majority of sentences are error-free makes only very occasional errors or inappropriacies
7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> addresses all parts of the task presents a clear position throughout the response presents, extends and supports main ideas, but there may be a tendency to overgeneralise and/or supporting ideas may lack focus 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> logically organises information and ideas; there is clear progression throughout uses a range of cohesive devices appropriately although there may be some under-/over-use presents a clear central topic within each paragraph 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses a sufficient range of vocabulary to allow some flexibility and precision uses less common lexical items with some awareness of style and collocation may produce occasional errors in word choice, spelling and/or word formation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses a variety of complex structures produces frequent error-free sentences has good control of grammar and punctuation but may make a few errors
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> addresses all parts of the task although some parts may be more fully covered than others presents a relevant position although the conclusions may become unclear or repetitive presents relevant main ideas but some may be inadequately developed/unclear 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> arranges information and ideas coherently and there is a clear overall progression uses cohesive devices effectively, but cohesion within and/or between sentences may be faulty or mechanical may not always use referencing clearly or appropriately uses paragraphing, but not always logically 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses an adequate range of vocabulary for the task attempts to use less common vocabulary but with some inaccuracy makes some errors in spelling and/or word formation, but they do not impede communication 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses a mix of simple and complex sentence forms makes some errors in grammar and punctuation but they rarely reduce communication

Page 1 of 2

Validity: **Validity** refers to the degree to which a test actually measures what it is intended to measure. This test is **valid** because it follows the procedures of the whole course regarding writing and deals with a topic that was discussed in the class itself. Students are writing about writing, it does not get closer to validity than that! But this basic validity, gains higher validity as part of the portfolio mentioned above. The test also has **face validity** because both teacher and student agree that the procedures and expectations of the exam have been worked on (and reworked on!) throughout the course. In terms of validity, it is recommended that this type of exam not be done in the last class, but in the second to last so that there will be one final opportunity for individual comments for each student.

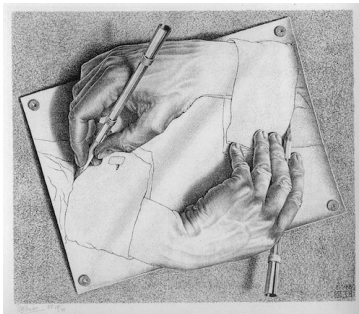
Reliability: When we speak of **reliability**, we speak of how consistent and dependable the test is. The test itself is dependable because it reflects what actually has been going on in the classroom for the last few weeks. It is also reliable in terms of scoring because any subjective tendencies on the part of the tester have been balanced by means of the rubrics given by IELTS (or similar). Of course, as with scoring, in the actual assessment of writing it is of great help to have a scorer who actually writes a lot and is open to the multiple intricacies that make of writing a unique and valuable skill. As the quote above puts it: *"Writing is, in fact, a transaction with words whereby you free yourself from what you presently think, feel and perceive."*

Impact: The **impact** depends on the actual value of this exam within the overall course. If it were the single element of assessment its impact would be huge and

very negative (if failed). But this is clearly not the intention of **this** exam: it is simply another sample of writing, albeit an important one, that will be added to the portfolio. Its impact is quite beneficial if seen from the perspective that some students are willing to go into an EAP course. Some might even seek to prepare themselves for exams such as the TOEFL which actually has a similar kind of exam to test the Writing Skill. It seems like a win-win situation.

Practicality: This exam is, as many writing exams, very practical because it does not involve a huge effort on the part of the institution where it might take place. It can simply be done in the **already allotted time** for the class itself. It simply involves pen and paper; it is **very cost-effective**. It might not be so practical for the teacher because, depending on the number of students in the class, the teacher might have to take extra time to correct the exams themselves. However, by using symbols the time spent is greatly reduced.

Washback: If we understand **washback** as "teaching to the test", that is to say *"when teachers see the form of the test their students are going to have to take and then .. start teaching for the test"* (See Harmer, **How to Teach English**, Chap. 13 ; Book for TESL I), then clearly in this test the whole course is basically teaching for the final test! All the course has prepared students for writing and washback here is positive because it would be extremely odd if, suddenly, at the end of the course the teacher were to test in a completely different manner. Particularly for the writing skill "teaching for the test" is actually not only not problematic, but beneficial. It makes sense.



ESL GRADING SYMBOLS

GLOBAL ERRORS --- most serious errors

VT - INCORRECT VERB TENSE

VF - VERB INCORRECTLY FORMED

MODAL - INCORRECT USE OR FORMATION OF A MODAL

COND - INCORRECT USE OR FORMATION OF A CONDITIONAL SENTENCE

SS - INCORRECT SENTENCE STRUCTURE

WO - INCORRECT OR AWKWARD WORD ORDER

CONN - INCORRECT OR MISSING CONNECTOR

PASS - INCORRECT FORMATION OR USE OF PASSIVE VOICE

UNCLEAR - UNCLEAR MESSAGE

LOCAL ERRORS --- less serious errors

SV - INCORRECT SUBJECT-VERB AGREEMENT

ART - INCORRECT OR MISSING ARTICLE

NUM - PROBLEM WITH THE SINGULAR OR PLURAL OF A NOUN

WC - WRONG WORD CHOICE, INCLUDING PREPOSITIONS

WF - WRONG WORD FORM

NONIDIOM - NONIDIOMATIC (NOT EXPRESSED THIS WAY IN ENGLISH)

OTHER ERRORS

CAP - CAPITALIZATION --- CAPITAL LETTER NEEDED

COH - COHERENCE --- ONE IDEA DOES NOT LEAD TO THE NEXT

CS - COMMA SPLICE --- TWO INDEPENDENT CLAUSES JOINED BY A COMMA

DM - DANGLING MODIFIER --- PHRASE OR CLAUSE WITH NO WORD(S) TO MODIFY IN A SENTENCE

FRAG - FRAGMENT --- INCOMPLETE SENTENCE

LC - LOWER CASE --- WORD(S) INCORRECTLY CAPITALIZED

P - PUNCTUATION --- PUNCTUATION INCORRECT OR MISSING

PRO REF - PRONOUN REFERENCE/AGREEMENT

RO - RUN-ON --- TWO INDEPENDENT CLAUSES JOINED WITH NO PUNCTUATION

SP - SPELLING ERROR --- WORD INCORRECTLY SPELLED



STAGE II

Some Features of Communication Across Stage II Writing

CLB 5 Initial Intermediate Ability	CLB 6 Developing Intermediate Ability	CLB 7 Adequate Intermediate Ability	CLB 8 Fluent Intermediate Ability
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing style requirements are informal to formal. • Topics are personally relevant, familiar and concrete. • Audience is familiar or clearly defined. • Tasks require about 1 paragraph of writing. • Forms are moderately complex in format, requiring responses of up to about 30 items. • Oral information to be reduced is relatively short (about 5 to 7 details). * • Print or online information to be reduced is about 1 page in length, and has clear organization and layout. It may be technical or specialized.* • Context is moderately demanding. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing style requirements are informal to formal. • Topics are personally relevant, familiar and concrete. • Audience is familiar or defined. • Tasks require up to about 2 paragraphs of writing. • Forms are moderately complex in format, and require responses of up to about 40 items. • Oral information to be reduced is relatively short (about 7 to 8 details or up to about 10 minutes) and may be specialized.* • Print or online information to be reduced or summarized is about 1.5 pages in length, and has clear organization and layout. It may be technical or specialized.* • Context is moderately demanding. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing style requirements are informal to formal. • Topics relate to everyday experience and are mostly concrete, but can be somewhat abstract. • Audience is familiar or defined. • Tasks require up to about 3 paragraphs of writing. • Forms are moderately complex in format, and require responses of up to about 40 items. • Oral information to be reduced is moderate in length (up to about 15 minutes) and may be technical or specialized.* • Print or online information to be reduced or summarized is about 2 pages in length, and has clear organization and layout. It may be technical or specialized.* • Context is moderately demanding. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing style requirements are informal to formal. • Topics relate to everyday experience and can be abstract. • Audience is familiar or defined. • Tasks require up to about 4 paragraphs of writing. • Forms are moderately complex in format, and may require responses of over 40 items. • Oral information to be reduced is moderate in length (up to about 20 minutes) and may be technical or specialized.* • Print or online information to be reduced or summarized is about 2 pages in length, and has clear organization and layout. It may be technical or specialized.* • Context is moderately demanding.

* Note: The ability to reproduce or reduce information is dependent on the writer's ability to comprehend. Therefore, it is assumed that the content to be reproduced or reduced has a degree of moderate complexity that does not exceed the writer's Reading Benchmark (in the case of print or online content) or Listening Benchmark (in the case of oral discourse).

IV. Sharing Information - WRITING - Stage II

Writing to inform others or to share or present information and ideas in community, work or study settings

CLB 5 Initial Intermediate Ability	CLB 6 Developing Intermediate Ability	CLB 7 Adequate Intermediate Ability	CLB 8 Fluent Intermediate Ability
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write a paragraph to relate a familiar sequence of events, description of a person, object or routine. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Addresses the purpose of the task. - Expresses a main idea and supports it with details. - Provides introduction, development, and conclusion in an adequate paragraph structure. - Provides accurate descriptions or accounts of events. - Provides adequate explanations where necessary. - Uses appropriate connective words. - Demonstrates strengths and limitations typical of Writing Benchmark 5, as listed in the Profile of Ability. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write 1 or 2 connected paragraphs to relate a familiar sequence of events, a story, a detailed description, or a comparison of people, things, routines or simple procedures. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Addresses the purpose of the task. - Expresses main ideas and supports them with details. - Provides introduction, development, and conclusion in adequate paragraph structure. - Provides accurate descriptions, comparisons or accounts of events in a clear sequence. - Uses appropriate connective words and phrases. - Demonstrates strengths and limitations typical of Writing Benchmark 6, as listed in the Profile of Ability. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write 2 or 3 connected paragraphs to relate a familiar sequence of events, make a comparison, or provide a detailed description of a person, system, routine or procedure. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Addresses the purpose of the task. - Expresses main ideas and supports them with details. - Presents text as a coherent connected whole with good use of appropriate connective words and phrases. - Provides accurate and detailed descriptions, explanations or accounts of events, in a clear sequence. - Demonstrates strengths and limitations typical of Writing Benchmark 7, as listed in the Profile of Ability. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write 3 or 4 connected paragraphs to relate a historical event, provide a detailed description of a phenomenon, explain a procedure, or express and analyze opinions on a familiar abstract topic. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Addresses the purpose of the task. - Provides accurate and detailed descriptions, explanations and accounts of events in a clear sequence. - Presents text as a coherent connected whole with good use of appropriate connective words and phrases. - Demonstrates strengths and limitations typical of Writing Benchmark 8, as listed in the Profile of Ability.

For the Profiles of Ability and Sample Tasks, see the Benchmark pages.