

The Mystery of the Writing Process: A Comparison of Mechanistic and Developmental Organic Writing

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Every writer knows putting words on paper is a difficult task. Sometimes the difficulties become insurmountable. He got himself into a state of frustration in writing when the flow of ideas stopped. A writer got stuck and banged his head against the wall for long hours instead of writing. His struggle becomes futile without getting the desired result. Despite being armed with knowledge and language ability, he cannot execute his task. The objective is primarily to understand the cognitive processes in writing employing different approaches: mechanistic writing and developmental organic writing models. This understanding is derived and inferred from some learning theories such as the behaviourist and mechanical models coupled with issues related to the functions of brains and 'mind' in writing as expounded by some known linguists and writers. It is hoped that by understanding the cognitive processes at work in writing, anyone who intends to write can benefit in terms of enhancing his writing skill and making writing a challenging and enjoyable task. The study is on a qualitative analysis of a book written by Peter Elbow on 'Writing Without Teachers' and 'Writing with Power'. Compared to the researchers, the data collected from his experiences will embark on the meaning of 'organic writing'.

Keywords: *Organic Writing, Mechanistic Writing, Thinking Evaluation, Knowledge, Words*



Introduction

The Mentalist paradigm emphasizes the role of the mind in the cognitive process (Chomsky, Aspect of theory, pp.47-55). Mind and brains are two realities of different substances, the first is spiritual, and the second is physical. Cognition is processed through the inborn rules hypothesized through the representation of the world in the mind by serial processing of abstract and fixed symbols (Marcelino, p. 165). Chomsky believes that this process proposes the inborn existence of the mind through the cognitive process that the surrounding has influenced. The brain contains thousands of neurons connected in parallel, which inter neural nets. Each neuron is constituted of a body and two kinds of filaments responsible for the net formation; they are the axon which are electrical transmitters connecting a neuron body to synapse and other neurons (ma.ultranet/BiologyPages/neurons.html). When an axon reaches a dendrite, there is a space in which chemical reactions are processed. The synapse reactions are responsible for learning. According to Marcelino, learning means modifying the synaptic forces (Marcelino, p. 168). As a result of the above case, the synthesis of philosophical grammar and structural linguistics introduced by mentalists begin to refute the behavioural sciences, which are not 'sciences of mind' that avoids the metaphysics issues but only 'discovery of the procedures.' Language is the 'mirror of the mind,' which constructs the data with an intrinsic property called 'universal grammar.' Thus, Chomsky believed that to understand the deep structure of generative grammar; the mental process is needed to explain the evolution of human language (Chomsky, language & Mind, 1968, pp. 107-108).

Writing involves both deliberative and subliminal cognitive processes. Herein lies the mystery of writing. The deliberative processes can be attributed to the left brain dealing with perception, language and thinking. At the same time, the subliminal aspect is attributed to the right brain, which neuroscientists regard as the unconscious domain that controls artistic cognition, also referred to as the mind (<https://www.brainpickings.org/2014/01/29/carol-dweck-mindset/>). Every writer knows putting words onto paper is a difficult task. A writer sometimes gets into serious writing difficulties despite being armed with knowledge and the corresponding language ability. The flow of ideas suddenly stops, and the problem becomes insurmountable. He spends hours worrying and fretting instead of writing. It is essential to understand the cognitive processes at work in writing to enhance the writing ability. It is hoped that a comparison between two essay approaches: the mechanistic writing model¹ and the developmental organic writing model² would reveal some insights into the cognitive processes involved. Some learning theories are cited as a backdrop to understanding the mental processes concerning learning which would apply to writing. Writings of linguists and neuroscientists are

¹ The approach based on behaviorist paradigm which denies the existence of mind.

² The approach using freewriting at the beginning of the writing process as propagated by Peter Elbow.



also reviewed to elucidate the roles of the brain and ‘mind’ in the writing process. The mechanistic writing approach, the conventional way, is what we have been familiar with as this is the model almost every one of us has been taught at school. In composition writing, our teachers instructed us to structure our thoughts and make an outline before writing: the introduction, body parts, and conclusion. We are told to jot down points for each feature and adhere to those points in our writing. This approach has helped us to write to pass our school examinations. However, when it comes to mature adult writing, many of us encounter problems of a different kind that this approach per se cannot help. As propagated by Peter Elbow, the developmental organic writing model takes us through a process of writing that is both deliberative and subliminal. It provides some light on the mystery of writing. The approach appears to be the opposite of what we have been taught at school. This is primarily why Peter Elbow titled his book “Writing without Teachers.” (Peter Elbow, 1998a: xi) It may also be appropriate under “Writing without Tears or Fears.”

The approach suggests informal developmental writing without any outline or structure at the beginning. A writer simply puts words onto paper spontaneously without concentrating too hard or pausing to think so that the flow of thought is unbroken. He terms this process of spontaneous writing “freewriting.” (1998a: 3). This is merely the production stage where words are generated to be used metaphorically as the “raw material,” which is later subjected to evaluation and criticism to become the first draft which will then be worked on to grow into a structured and matured satisfactory writing. Some would object to this approach as an invitation to bad writing. Of course, in this approach to writing, you put a lot of garbage onto paper, but it also brings the “gems” that could be used to develop your ideas. The trash can just be thrown out. The advantage is that at least you have taken the garbage out of your head, and you are setting the stage for good writing after having cleared the clutters in your head. The other advantage is that you learn a technique to generate words simply and spontaneously without worrying and fretting, so you spend your time writing rather than sitting with very few words coming your way.

A Glimpse of some Learning Theories and Implications on Writing

The early 19th century saw science be premised upon empirical philosophy. In this conception, knowledge must be subject to empirical proof. Knowledge is obtained through sense perception by observations or experiments. What cannot be scientifically proven is not regarded as scientific and relegated to superstition. The modern Psychological conception of knowledge acquisition is primarily based on this scientific paradigm focused on observations and experimentations. This conception of science greatly influences the evolution of learning



theories and its ramification on teaching approaches that focus on the human brain's cognitive processes, ignoring the role of the mind.

This gave rise in the 20th century to approaches in teaching based on the behaviourist model. This model regards knowledge acquisition as a matter of stimulus-response (Bloomfield, 1933: 20) or conditioning with the fundamental belief or assumption that human brains perceive external stimuli and selectively keep this experience which becomes knowledge 'stored' in the memory. The behaviourist model considered learning to be purely the cognitive activities of the human brain. This conception is too simplistic as it denies the mind. Denying the reason, the learning process becomes too mechanical. The brain is regarded as an organ that absorbs knowledge by its very nature as a storage of ideas and concepts. With constant repetition, the brain merely absorbs knowledge selectively from external stimuli. What is not taken into account is the state of 'consciousness' human beings experience at a level beyond the physical entity of the brain. A human person has a consciousness that cannot be attributed to brain functions alone. It goes much deeper as explored and explained from the mentalist paradigm (Yaacob. S, 2016: 8-9, Yaacob. S, et al., 2014a: 466).

The mind is central to the cognitive process (Chomsky, 1995: 47-55). Chomsky (1972: 3-18) has probed deeper into cognition and has thrown light through his generative grammar to show the link between language and mind. This certainly has ramifications on the learning theory and acquisition of knowledge. Chomsky believes that this process of cognition is at a deeper level. The ability of humans to have language in the first place and the antecedent ability to process information into knowledge is a reflection of the inborn existence of the mind. Otherwise, the brain is a physical organ. It has been seen as an organ that interprets sensations and images at the physical level of consciousness. Another level of consciousness gives meaning beyond the physical representation of these world images: the mind. The mind is not seated anywhere in the brain. It is not a physical entity. At the same time, the behaviourists dismissed the reason (Chomsky, 1957: 51). A Mentalist such as (Marcelino Poersch, 2005: 165) sees cognition as the product of the mind, which is not a physical entity. He regards cognition as the process of the mind, spiritual in nature, which method abstractions and symbols to give meaning to images and sense perception taken in by the brain. The synapse reactions in the brain bring about learning through connectivity to the mind.

CRITICAL THINKING IS ANALYZING AND SYNTHESIZING KNOWLEDGE

The philosophical grammar and structural linguistics, as expounded by Marcelino, suggest interrelationship processes between the brain and the mind (2005: 165). The brain contains neurons interconnected by 'axons,' the electrical transmitters connecting a neuron body with

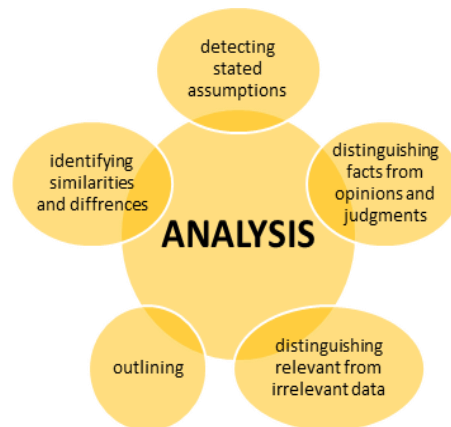
the synapse and other neurons that give rise to perception and cognition, but the seat of spiritual consciousness is not in the brain; it is in mind (ma.ultranet/Biologypages/neurons.html). The mentalist's philosophical grammar and structural linguistics synthesis take a higher-level conception of language (Yaacob S et al., 2014a: 465-466), regarding it as the 'mirror of the mind.' This gives rise to the conception of 'universal grammar' from the Mentalists framework recognising language as the innate predisposition of the mind. The cognitive processes involved in writing can be gauged from studies on how the human mind recreates natural phenomena and mental concepts. Mental concepts are representations of external phenomena either based on facts or assumptions. Paul and Elder (Richard Paul, 2012a: 5-30) conceive critical thinking ability requires an ability to conceptualize, apply, analyze, synthesize and evaluate information gathered from or generated by observation, experience, reflection, reasoning, communication, etc. It can be inferred that the cognitive processes in critical thinking are somewhat similar to those involved in writing. The procedures are as graphically presented below:

A writer needs to interpret impressions and thoughts, and feelings in his brain and convert his understanding into words, concepts, beliefs, or assumptions to produce a coherent piece of writing to be decoded by his reader. As seen in the figure above, interpretation involves the identification of ideas that a writer wants to make meaning of, identification of his position or opinion, distinguishing the differences between facts and assumptions, and understanding what is implicit within his thoughts and even felt sense and to verbalize them to put it across to his audience. To write, he has to understand his ideas and opinions clearly. Cognitive writing processes will be concerned with explication through recalling memories, organizing thoughts and articulating them by producing words onto paper ensuring coherency and conciseness. Aspects of the description are as shown below:



(figure 1)

Another cognitive function that is going on in the brain or mind in the process of writing is analysis. At this stage, the writer's thinking focuses on separating facts from opinions and assessing what is relevant to his reader. This aspect of the cognitive processes is portrayed below:



(figure 2)

What does this mean in the context of writing? It means that the writer's brain is taking a heavy load in writing. If this load is taken all at once, the brain will not cope. There will be a rejection, and the process of writing is frustrating. A writer needs to ease the load to avoid a 'heating up' that causes a mental block. Organic writing was recognized as having no crystalline structure and no test rules. In other words, 'the method comes naturally in finding the work path (<https://kennethmarkhoover.me/2012/01/11/writing-as-an-organic-process>).

What is the role of knowledge and language ability in writing? A writer is a wordsmith. Good command of language is a necessity. The other prerequisite is knowledge, but these prerequisites are not sufficient. A writer must have a strong motivation and commitment to share his thoughts and be brave enough to stick his neck out to be criticized. He may be lucky enough to be appreciated by unleashing some intellectual storms. There is a need to bring up the brain and mind issue. Along this line, Chomsky's analysis goes deeper to expound on the deep structure of language at a level beyond the brain. He uses this conception to explain the evolution of human language (Chomsky, 1968, pp. 107-108).

Neuroscientist Sam Harris (2014: 76-77) mentions that the human brain is divided at the level of the cerebrum (everything above the brain) into right and left hemispheres. The right and left brains are connected by several nerve tracts, passing information between them. In humans, the left hemisphere generally makes a unique contribution to language and complex movement



performance. The human proper ear advantage (left hemisphere) is for words, digits, nonsense syllables, Morse code, complex rhythm, and ordering of temporal information. The left ear advantage (right hemisphere) is for melodies, musical chords, environmental sounds, and tones of voice. Sam Harris claims that the unconscious mind exists. He says, “Recent advances in experimental psychology and neuroimaging have allowed us to understand the boundary between conscious and unconscious mental processes with increasing precision. We now know at least two systems in the brain -often referred to as “dual processes’- govern human cognition, emotion, and behaviour. One is unconscious and automatic, and the other is conscious and deliberative. It is also known that the brain processes allow for words and pictures to be delivered to the mind subliminally.” It has also been demonstrated that the meanings of words must be gleaned before consciousness. Subliminally promised rewards to drive activity in the brain’s reward centres. These processes occur outside consciousness (Sam Harris, 2014: 76-77). Then, how do we differentiate between writing and speaking? We think with words, and the cognitive processes involved are almost the same in speaking and writing. There are two points of difference. In talking, we do not pause to perfect our thought or sentences. We speak spontaneously. Writing does not demand spontaneity. We have to wait and think to delete and assess and evaluate our thoughts and match our thoughts and feelings with appropriate words. Another difference in speaking is that we can immediately get feedback from our listeners or audience. We can sense the perception of our audience and thereby rephrase or repeat as necessary. But in writing, our audience is somewhere remote, so we try to be as transparent as possible. As a result, we think harder and longer and place too high a demand upon our cognitive faculty. As mentioned by Chomsky on the natural languages, each sentence is representable as a finite sequence of these phonemes – though – there are infinitely many sentences (Chomsky, 1957:13).

The pressure we exert upon our brain sometimes causes a backlash resulting in our thoughts being in the clutch of a mental blockage. When this happens, the writing process is frustrating. This may be why many knowledgeable people cannot make time to write beyond the standard duty of their professions.

Two Major Approaches in the Teaching of Writing.

The teaching of writing has been influenced considerably by two primary schools of thought: the behaviourist and the mentalist conception of the cognitive processes involved in writing. The conventional model in teaching writing can be traced to the behaviourist conception, which focused on the brain’s activities to exclude the mind. Many neuroscientists in the 21st century believe that reason exists as a spiritual entity though not much is known. A prolific writer, Peter Elbow, thinks that writing is both deliberative and subliminal, alluding to the fact that both the

mind and brain contribute to the cognitive processes in writing. According to him, a writer needs to access the depth of his mind to understand the words he is putting onto paper. He stressed the importance of words meaning relationships. A writer needs to capture his fleeting thoughts and even feel the sense to put them down on paper as quickly as possible to become the raw material in a metaphorical sense. The raw material is allowed to 'grow' through critical evaluation at the proceeding stage of writing. As propagated by Peter Elbow, the organic approach considers writing as the interrelationship of brain and mind. Writing may be an enjoyable intellectual trip or a predicament; as I have heard a writer say, "This book writes itself." What does it mean? It sounds mysterious? Indeed, it is. When saying that the book writes itself, it is not in the sense of automatic writing of a person possessed as claimed by certain occultists. The writer expresses joy and satisfaction because writing becomes almost effortless and pleasurable. Without mental blockages, writing is rewarding, challenging, and relatively easy. Thoughts flow, feeling and meaning and even felt sense merge easily into words that come smoothly into paper. What is behind this mystery? Writing becomes relatively easy when it goes beyond the deliberative level to the subliminal level. There is a two-way cognitive process involving the brain's conscious and unconscious hemispheres at the subliminal level, which some linguists term brain-mind connectivity. Most writers would agree that writing is sometimes really tough. In journalistic or academic writing, many a writer experiences mental block. When this happens, he feels anxious and helpless. It is critical for one who intends to write to learn how to avoid this situation of being stuck: unable to go on writing which results in a lot of time spent unproductively and at the same time beset by a feeling of anxiety and helplessness. It does seem that sometimes inspiration is not enough to carry a writer through to the completion of his task despite being armed with Knowledge and language ability. Below is the experience of a writer. Have you ever been caught in this situation when writing?

I could feel an adrenalin surge in my blood with ideas brewing in my mind as I sat down to write. I felt satisfied and inspired, anticipating a smooth pouring of words on my computer screen. I was very confident. This time writing was merely making a visible imprint of ideas already thought through in my mind. It would be an easy and pleasurable task. However, it did not take me long to realize that the process of writing was not anymore straightforward as it had always been. As I grappled with words in the actual writing process, they eluded me, and I began to feel anxious about the outcome of my task.

As I got longer into the writing process, I began to feel a dull ache slowly building up in my head. I evaluated the sentences I had written and found that they did not correspond to the ideas roaming in my mind. The longer I kept pounding the letters on the keyboard, the less clear I was of the pictures I had had. Soon after, I felt a gloom constraining my thinking. I began to think adequate to handle the task at hand. Slowly, I became overwhelmed by a feeling of powerlessness. It seemed I had lost the key to open the doors to the ideas imprisoned in my



mind. I began to struggle in anguish to bring to the surface the ideas that seemed submerged in the darkness somewhere in my mind.

Based on the statement above, we understood that the depth structure presents its semantic interpretation (Chomsky, 1972: 3-18). This means that intuition is not a secondary element in a linguistic study but rather a substantial part. However, the mechanical writing approach is the conventional teaching of writing we are accustomed to at school can be regarded as to be in the category of the automated system in the paper. Books on this approach are plentiful, indicating a persisting trend.

He has to direct and control his writing at the start of the essay. He writes only after he can produce polished sentences matching his meanings. He has to think carefully so that his sentences are satisfactory with coherency and sequence. It means that he should spend time thinking so as not to meander or digress. He is asked to strive for perfection.

The mechanical approach assumes that writing is merely structuring and ordering ideas already thought through by the writer. This presupposes that ideas are already evident in the writer's head in well-polished sentences ready for the taking as he sits to write. (This may happen by a stroke of luck.) In practice, this is not always so. At the point of writing, a writer does not have ready sentences in his head. He has only hazy ideas of the meanings he wants to put on paper. The best he could do is snatch these fleeting ideas and quickly put them in words so that he can capture these thoughts and work on them later to clarify and evaluate. The guidelines for writing using the mechanical approach require the writer to think clearly before writing. After he puts his thoughts onto paper, he could have a clearer idea of what he says. A writer cannot come up with readily polished sentences without first putting his thoughts on paper to be scrutinized. He must put his sense of meaning, even felt sense, into words that may not be appropriate when capturing his ideas. He is not presenting these rough ramblings to his audience; it is to help him to think using those words. So it is essential to separate the process of idea generation and editing. If he evaluates his thought immediately at the idea generation stage, the chances are many ideas are killed before they are born.

The Experience of a writer Caught in a Mental block

The writer encounters his first problem trying to develop a perfect introduction. The writer puts onto paper a few sentences thinking hard and diligently. As he reads them again and again, he does not like them. It does not sound right. It is superficial, lacking intellectual depth, clarity, strength, and vigour. It is dull and rather dull. Some sentences even sound stupid. He scratches them out. He makes a new start (Peter Elbow, 1973: 117). Again the sentences do not say



precisely what he wants to say. He keeps wondering. This is his bad day. He is not inspired to write. He cannot postpone writing as he has a deadline to meet. He keeps on struggling, knowing that writing a good introduction is the hardest part. Several hours later, he is not getting what he wants. He got stuck. He has to think harder. He is wondering what has gone wrong. He has taken a lot of pain to come up with the outline. He got the structure and has jotted the points he wants to say in the introduction, body part, and the conclusion, but these do not seem to help. He has already spent many hours sitting and fretting about writing, but the report is not happening. He looks again at the few sentences he manages to squeeze from his head. Again in desperation, he erases everything that he has written. The content, language, and style do not match his standard. He strives toward perfection. At last, his intellectual and emotional energy dried up.

Later he begins to relax but still tinkering around, hoping to improve. He looks up the dictionary and the thesaurus and begins replacing some words for words that he thinks are more appropriate. He changes the order of his sentences. He even checks his spelling and punctuation marks. He wants a perfect opening paragraph. However, what he gets is far from what he expects (1973: 9).

The sentences do not flow naturally. It is jerky as the sequencing is not smooth. Also, he noticed his opening paragraph contained many unnecessary words. He scratches his head and plucks off some hair while cutting here and crossing there in his writing. At last, he got the opening paragraph. But alas! It cannot survive his sharp scrutiny. His new version got thrown out as well. He has perfected only a few sentences. He is wondering now why everything seems so evident in his head, but he cannot put it in the right words. He is wondering why his sentences do not jive! There is no energy, no power (Peter Elbow, 1998:73).

Comment on the reasons for the predicament encountered.

Now, what is the problem the writer is facing here? He is thinking too hard. He puts unnecessary effort into being perfect, and so instead of writing and allowing his ideas to flow, he cuts out words or sentences and rewrites. His attempt to get every sentence right from the beginning is the root cause of his problem. He is trying to perfect a part of his writing without the benefit of viewing it as a whole. This is a grave error. His writing loses coherence and depth of meaning. The sequencing is not smooth, and the sentences are scattered like pieces of deadwood. He notices there are sentences he likes, but they do not help, just like the icing on a cake. They do not have the power to give meaning to what he wants to say. At worse, they block his thinking process.



When this happens, he is beset with tension and anxiety. Ideas dissipated from his mind. Writing becomes an ordeal. He is in desperation and helplessness, caught in a self-imposed mental block. Then, can writing skills be taught? It has been recognized that the cognitive processes involved in writing are both deliberative and subliminal. The subliminal aspect is a mystery that cannot be understood and taught. Every writer has a different experience at the subliminal level, and even for the same writer, the experience is always different from time to time in writing. When asked about the secret recipe of their writing, many writers, even prolific ones, would say, “Well, I just write.” Writing is what every writer teaches himself to do. It is a skill learned by the report. The more one writes, the better the paper will be or the easier the process will become. This is why some people become prolific writers while others, even with knowledge and language ability, postpone writing indefinitely.

What happens in writing is well articulated by Peter Elbow. “Writing without Teachers” (1998) is a good read. He elaborates on making writing less laborious using a developmental and organic approach. He makes use of freewriting as a means to avoid mental blocks. Freewriting is not an end. It is only for obtaining the “raw material” to be evaluated and analyzed “to grow” into a matured piece of writing.

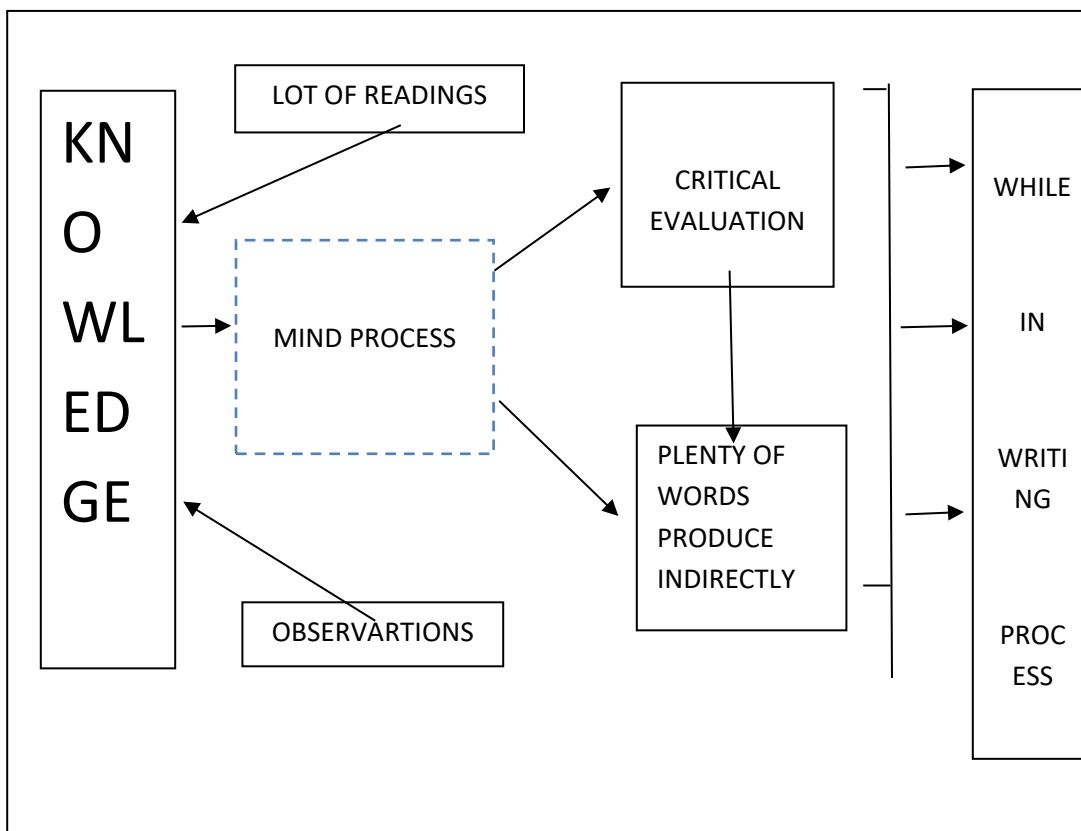
Organic Developmental Writing Approach

Some writers, especially prolific writers, perhaps have been applying this approach without being aware as it comes naturally to them. They begin writing without putting so much control or structuring their thoughts. They merely accept words that come to their mind and transfer it onto paper without being critical. In other words, they impose no structure. It is a brainstorming process. The purpose is to dig into the mind’s deeper recesses, trying to capture any fleeting thoughts or meanings, feelings, or felt senses. The result is rough and sketchy. This is not intended for the audience. It is only to assist the writer in clarifying his thoughts. A writer who takes this approach in writing will find it easier to generate words, and the thinking process becomes smooth with no severe mental blockages. Also, he does not have to wait for inspiration to start writing. He has generated words and thoughts with ease, which usually inspired or motivated him to examine further, analyze, or clarify his meanings. So, the writing process continues for hours and hours as a pleasurable experience in writing rather than a burden. This approach has been propagated by Peter Elbow for decades now. Below is a summary of what he says about the organic developmental process of writing (1973: 15):

Writing as an organic developmental process: the rule is to start writing before you know your meaning at all. Encourage your words to change and evolve gradually. Only at some stage will you know what you want to say or the words you want to say. You should expect to end up

different from what you started. Knowing your mind is not when you start out but later on as you get deeper. Evaluate and criticize, encourage your words gradually to change and evolve Think of writing not as a way to transmit a message but as a way to grow and bring a note into being. Writing is a way to end up thinking something you couldn't have started out thinking at the beginning. Writing is a transaction with words whereby you free yourself from what you presently believe, feel and perceive. Even if you succeed in making your meaning clear at the start by releasing yourself from the first impression, you make available to yourself something better than what you would be stuck with if you had succeeded in making your meaning clear.

The figure below presents the idea above: Figure 3



This model looks inefficient – a lengthy process with lots of writing and lots of throwing away – is efficient since it’s the best way to work up to what you want to say and how to say it. The fundamental inefficiency is to beat your head against the wall, trying to say what you mean or saying it well before you are ready to do it.

This is a declaration of independence in writing: freedom from care, control, planning, order, steering, trying to get it right, and getting it good. Peter Elbow says, “*I fail when I plan to make*



it good, keep control, figure out my point ahead of time with outlines. My survival depended on forcing myself to have early drafts no matter how bad they were. I had to write without stopping whatever came to me in my thinking about my general topic, and I had to stop worrying whether what I was writing at the moment was any good. I could write decent stuff if I let go of planning, control, and vigilance. I had to invite chaos and bad writing. Then after I wrote a lot and figured out a lot, I could go back and find order and reassert control and try to make it good. First, make it and make it good later.”

What is freewriting? The crucial part of the developmental writing approach is freewriting, as propagated by John Elbow. The idea of freewriting is simply to write for ten minutes or twenty minutes. It is non-stop writing. Go quickly without rushing. Do not stop to look back, cross something out, and wonder how to spell something to wonder what word or thought to use or think about what you are doing. If you can't think of a word or spelling, use a squiggle or write, "I can't think of it." Just put down something. Just put down whatever is in your mind. If you got stuck, just write, "I can't think what to say as many times as you want or repeat the last word you repeatedly wrote. The only requirement is you never stop. How does it help? Almost everybody interposes a massive and complicated series of editing between the time words start to be born into consciousness and find their way onto the page. So what we normally do is edit as we write. We also edit unacceptable thoughts and feelings. We demand that we get the right words and sentences immediately as we write. The process of editing becomes cumbersome. Getting them right is a terrible burden: you can work hours to get a paragraph "right" and discover it's no "right". And then give up. Freewriting may seem crazy, but it helps. It is the process of producing words. There is no editing or evaluation at this stage. At the start, just keep on producing words. Don't put the unnecessary burden on thinking about whether you are using the right words. Accept everything that comes to your mind. It will make writing less blocked. It is indeed a lesson for failure if you intend to get everything right at the beginning of writing. You will have to accept garbage or bad writing. At this point, you accept the 'gems' with all the mud and rubbish, which will be filtered through quick revising later when the garbage is thrown out. A structured approach to writing has ingrained a compulsive, premature editing habit in us. This makes writing hard. It also creates reports dead. If we allow the natural organic way to work, the words we produce have a sound, texture, rhythm, and voice. This is the primary source of power in a piece of writing—an example³ of a 10-minute freewriting exercise (Peter Elbow, 1973: 4).

I think I will write what's on my mind, but the only thing right now is what to write for ten minutes. I have never done this before, and I'm not prepared in any way—the sky is cloudy today, how's that? Now, I'm afraid I won't think of what to write when I get to the end of the

³ This is a fairly coherent exercise, sometimes they are very incoherent, which is fine.



sentence- well, here I'm at the end of the sentence- here I am again. Furthermore, at least I'm still writing- ah yes! Here comes the question again- what am I getting out of this? What point is there in it? It's almost obscene always to ask it, but I seem to question everything that way, and I was going to say something else about that, but I got so busy writing down the first part that I forgot what I was leading into. This is fun. Oh, don't stop writing- cars and trucks speeding by out the window, pens cluttering across people's papers. The sky is still cloudy- is it symbolic that I should be mentioning it? Huh? I don't know. Maybe I should try colors, blue, red, dirty words- wait a minute- no, can't do that, orange, yellow, arm tired green, pink-violet magenta lavender red-brown, black green- now that I can't think of any more colors- just about done – relief may be.

Objection: Freewriting is an invitation to write garbage. I struggled to make my writing clear, more organized, and less chaotic. Freewriting will make my writing worse.

Reply: Yes, it produces garbage, but that's all right. Using the conventional approach, you struggle too hard that you become helpless and confused in the face of a blank piece of paper. There is garbage in your head; it will infect if you don't let it out onto paper. Waste in your head poisons you. Trash on paper can safely be put in a wastepaper basket. You free yourself of this garbage to write better.

Freewriting helps a writer pour more attention, focus, and energy into writing. This is why free writing exercises must be short (not more than 20 minutes). Freewriting is a way to produce bits of paper, unorganized but good bits. These good bits may be long or short. It may happen frequently or only occasionally. It may happen soon if a writer has done freewriting for several weeks. In freewriting, a writer's mind may get into high gear and produce a set of words that grow organically out of a hazy thought or feeling or perception- the integration of meanings is at a more acceptable level than he can achieve by conscious planning or arranging. The writer's intention permeates the writing. The substances have been blended into a better story, integrated more thoroughly, not merely manipulated by his mind but sifting through the entire self. He doesn't feel the mechanical cranking of changing gears in such writing as the process goes smoothly, naturally, and organically.



Conclusion

For those who are comfortable with their accustomed writing approach, there is no need to change to the suggested method using freewriting as a tool for idea generation. They have already established a system that suits them best by their disposition and writing skills. Congratulation to those who wonder why sometimes writing is relatively easy, but at other times it is a burden. They need to reflect upon the reasons that make the difference. From our perspective, the pressure to structure our thoughts at the initial writing stage adversely affects our ability to generate views and ideas. Structuring works against us because our brain does not think in structured ways but rather in freewheeling ways with no pressure. This is why freewriting is a vital tool. It precedes the structuring stage, used for quick revising and editing. Only at this stage do we consider our audience to focus on meeting their need. Writers sometimes claim inspiration is behind the mystery of writing. How motivation works and the source of this inspiration are also unknown. Many would agree that going is challenging when faced with a mental block in writing. Many hours are spent unproductively in anxiety and tension. It has been demonstrated that this blockage to thinking can be avoided by throwing caution to the wind at the initial stage of writing. Do not force the brain to think in structured and strongly directed ways. Too hard control on the brain means a writer is engaged in multiple cognitive activities that cause an overload on the brain, resulting in the unsteady flow of thought.



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