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Creative imitation: An option for teaching writing

Poindexter, Wanda, M.A.

The University of Arizona, 1988

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CREATIVE IMITATION
AN OPTION FOR TEACHING WRITING

by
Wanda Poindexter

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of the
DIVISION OF LANGUAGE, READING AND CULTURE
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
For the Degree of
MASTER OF ARTS
WITH A MAJOR IN READING
In the Graduate College
THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA

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APPROVAL BY THESIS DIRECTOR

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I have been provided with so much assistance in the preparation of this thesis that there is not enough space on the allotted page to acknowledge everyone's support. Therefore, I will briefly thank each of the following persons:

Margaret Fleming, Thesis Advisor--Dr. Fleming provided me with practical insights, creative criticism, skills in listening, patience, and encouragement. She advised me on all portions of my research, making timely and appropriate suggestions. I appreciate the dozens of books and articles she generously lent to me.

Duane Roen, Thesis Committee--In addition to valuable support and suggestions on the thesis, Dr. Roen helped me with the Composition Instructor's Questionnaire and to obtain the necessary approvals to distribute it. The critical discussions he facilitated in his course "Composition Theory and Practice" were valuable in generating and informing the ideas in the thesis.

Jim Rankin, Thesis Committee--Dr. Rankin supervised and supported my independent study project in rhetoric and composition, providing important background information for my thesis. He also read and reviewed drafts of the thesis and generously lent books and bibliographies.

Theresa Enos--Her discussions with me and advice during the planning stage of the thesis are much appreciated. Dr. Enos challenged me to pursue a fuller understanding of the classical tradition of rhetoric and its connections to our current teaching of writing.

Thomas Willard--Dr. Willard provided wise and timely advice on my thesis project. He allowed me to audit his seminar "Philosophy, Pedagogy, and Poetry" and provided a foundation for the research I have done on the thesis.

Dhira Mahoney--Dr. Mahoney read an early draft of the thesis providing useful critical and editorial comments. She is a role model for the effective, creative use of imitation in the writing classroom.

Charles Davis--Dr. Davis made valuable suggestions for improving the Instructor Questionnaire and provided guidance in submitting it to the UA Composition Board.

Chris Johnson--Dr. Johnson and the Language Research Center Staff (Ginger, Lydia, and Sean) provided patient, knowledgeable training and assistance.

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ABSTRACT

Creative Imitation is an alternative strategy to help students improve their expository writing in the college composition classroom. It combines writing by imitation with process modeling to increase student fluency with both the products and processes of writing.

For centuries, a technique of "imitatio" was used extensively to teach oral and written language traditions. Isocrates, Quintilian, and Cicero shaped the tradition of imitation of writing models. Their principles were revived in the 60s by two neo-classical educators Edward P. J. Corbett and Frank D'Angelo.

Objections to the principles of imitation to teach writing are analyzed: that models intimidate students, that imitation focuses on the products instead of the processes of writing, and that imitation reduces individual creativity.

Some teachers have reported success with student-centered writing-by-imitation exercises in their college composition classrooms. They assert that imitation exercises increase student awareness of correct usage, grammar conventions, rhetorical strategies, and paradoxically enable students to develop an "authentic" voice in their own writing.

I. THE CHALLENGE

Introduction

In the instructor's manual for Maxine Hairston's writing textbook, Contemporary Composition, she discusses the emotional baggage we attach to words. Our connotations affect the way we think and the way we use language. Some connotations, such as references to girls as "chicks" or boys as "jocks," are clearly stereotyping. Other connotations, as Hairston points out, are more subtle:

There are, however, subtle ways in which the language we use controls our thoughts. The textual reference to real, genuine, original, and authentic as opposed to synthetic, imitation, substitute, and pseudo illustrates the point. If you press the students to give you a rational basis for their intuitive preference for the first group, they almost certainly will not be able to do so. They will have to say a priori that what is

natural or original is good. The problem is that we have no neutral vocabulary in which to discuss the concepts of real versus artificial. OUR PREJUDICES ARE BUILT INTO THE LANGUAGE (second emphasis mine). (Composition 84)

Taking a closer look at this example, we see:

real		synthetic
genuine	opposed to	imitation
original		substitute
authentic		pseudo.

This dichotomy carries over into our concept of writing. To be real, authentic (add all the other "good" connotations), writing must be autonomous--an individual, self-created act. This "romantic" view of writing tends to limit the way we teach composition. In its place I propose a more collaborative paradigm¹ based on the principles of

¹My analysis here is based on a class discussion with Theresa Enos and an article by Kenneth A. Bruffee, "Writing and Reading as Collaborative or Social Acts," included in the Enos Sourcebook 565-74. In addition, I see a parallel to Duane Roen's schema of Vygotsky's "zone of proximal development," also discussed in his course, Composition Theory and Practice. The comparison to principles of imitation is mine. I see the writing model (via effective matching and collaborative process modeling) becoming a valuable guide for the student.

imitation, process modeling, and most importantly the needs and abilities of our students.

As Hairston states, our prejudices toward imitation are built into our language. We are wary of imitations--especially anything related to imitation writing. Beware of copies and plagiarism, we rightly say. We want "the real thing." Imitation is not, of course, the real thing; but, as will be explained later, it can lead--in an almost paradoxical way--to originality, creativity, and the discovery of an authentic voice in student writing.

Medical students spend thousands of hours working from computer simulations, plastic models (of the heart, brain, and other organs), cadavers, and animals, before they are ready to treat a human being. Artists use models and do thousands of sketches and studies "in the style of" recognized masters, on the way to developing originality and creativity on their own. Science students replicate classical experiments and learn much of their discipline's methodology and pedagogy in the process. In light of these examples--the rationale of which applies equally to writing by imitation²--why would any educators be against the use of

²In 1984 the Kentucky English Bulletin published an entire issue "Writing by Imitation;" it was there that I first encountered this term. I use the term writing by imitation to emphasize the WRITING BY--that in using imitation as a tool to teach composition, the focus is on the writing that is generated not the imitation which is simply part of the teaching/learning strategy to arrive at the student's creation in writing.

the principles of imitation to teach writing? Two reasons: imitation is rejected as being a part of the product paradigm³ of writing that does not take into account the importance of teaching processes; alternately, imitation is rejected as stifling creativity. Both of these criticisms will be detailed and answered in the course of the thesis.

Statement of the Challenge

Educators across the nation agree that college students need to improve their writing.⁴ However, writing improvement is not a new curriculum goal; it has been a long-standing educational priority for composition teachers. Although the goal remains the same, what changes is the methodology--how we attempt to teach students to become better writers--and the theoretical framework, currently called paradigm, under which we work.

³Throughout the thesis I will be referring to the shift in paradigm from a focus on what we write, the product of writing, to a focus on how we write, the processes of writing. Consult Hairston's article for further information about this change in pedagogic emphasis.

⁴Composition courses in high school and adult education have a similar goal. The information and suggestions in the thesis could be used in these courses too.

Although Writing Across the Curriculum has encouraged the teaching of writing in all disciplines, English Composition instructors⁵ continue to be the designated teachers whose professional objective is to teach students to write effectively. In conjunction with the need to teach students to write effectively, recent pedagogical research--Flower and Hayes, Murray, Berthoff, and others--has underlined the connection between thinking and writing, and asserted the importance of cognitive development as a prerequisite for effective writing. Effective writing implies effective thinking. Therefore, another objective is added to the composition curriculum: help students to develop cognitive skills. Throughout this thesis, when I use the term writing it will be understood to include the developmental and cognitive skills that are a crucial component of composition processes. In addition, I will be suggesting that writing by imitation can aid cognitive development, since the student learns how to abstract the cognitive patterns and rhetorical strategies from the

⁵The terms writing instructor and composition instructor will be used interchangeably to refer to teachers of freshman composition, entry-level nonfiction, essay and other college expository writing courses. The terms writing and composition also refer to these types of prose.

written model, as well as from the instructor's process modeling, and then apply those strategies to his or her own writing.

Thus, students need to learn to write and to improve their cognitive skills in order to improve their writing, and teachers need to guide them in this process of improvement.⁶ How can writing teachers meet their instructional objectives? The answer is probably as varied as the students one finds in the writing class; there is not one "ideal" method for teaching writing. The creative, effective teacher will learn through practice and

⁶Up to this point I have been using the phrase "improve student writing" without an explicit definition. There is some controversy over what it means to improve student writing. What is the goal of college composition courses? To enable students to produce the typical five paragraph essay? Is English Composition a "service" course to prepare students for the necessary writing assignments they must do in their content area: research papers, laboratory reports, answers to essay questions? Is the teaching of writing the teaching of conventions? Should composition courses prepare students for the academic, professional, or technical writing they may do after graduation? Or is the writing in composition courses to be taught for the sake of writing as a tool of discovery and knowledge in its own right? The purpose of college composition courses is probably to help students improve their writing so they could write effectively in any of these situations: in jobs, required formats in other courses, and using writing as a tool for discovery and learning.

My thinking here is based on readings from the Enos Sourcebook and class discussions from Duane Roen's course: Composition Theory and Practice.

experimentation which methods generally work for most students and which strategies might work for students with specific or non-responsive problems.⁷

Educators, such as Donald Murray and Peter Elbow, have advised that the most important guidance a teacher can provide is to create an environment that stimulates thought and encourages writing. Equally important is Frank Smith's observation that students need to perceive themselves as writers in order to become successful readers and writers (53). Research on writing has probably convinced most of us, by now, that the best way to teach students writing is to motivate and encourage them to write as often as they can and in as many different styles and genres as possible. Students learn to write by writing. How can teachers motivate students to write as often as they need--as often as they must--in order to become better writers? Anyone who writes a lot knows that writing is hard work. Writing is messy, time-consuming, sometimes frustrating, involves juggling so many things at once, and often done on a deadline. Students complain of overwhelming demands on their time and energy.

⁷My statement here was probably inspired by Donald Graves, who encourages teachers to put the theoretical and practical knowledge they obtain from readings and conferences to work as they become experimental researchers in their own classrooms by hypothesizing, manipulating variables, observing, and recording (Language, Reading, and Culture Conference. Tucson, AZ. 12 Feb. 1988).

Given this challenge: students need to improve their writing and teachers need to guide them in this endeavor, several teachers--for example, Phyllis Brooks, Burton Hatlen, Kenneth Roemer, and Jeffery Sommers--have discovered that writing by imitation can be an enjoyable, creative strategy to help their college composition students write more often, more willingly, and more effectively. They report that writing by imitation--creating their own text by writing a close stylistic imitation of a carefully chosen writing model, helps students in the following areas: improvement in grammar and syntax, a clearer understanding of rhetorical situations and strategies, and an ability to develop a personal voice in their writing. Specific examples will be given from each of these teachers in the Review of Related Literature section.

My examination of the value of imitation in composition courses is addressed to a target audience of three groups of college writing teachers: those who have never had the opportunity to use imitation, those who gave it a try but had little success, and those who in theory and in practice are against it. I hope to increase teacher awareness of the potential of imitation--to encourage teachers to add it to their teaching strategies to motivate and guide their students. At the conclusion of the thesis, I will re-create a strategy of instruction based on the

classical practice of imitatio, supplemented by the contemporary practice of process modeling.

I will suggest that a strategy I am labeling "Creative Imitation"⁸ can be an effective technique for teaching writing and enabling students to improve their writing through a more intuitive grasp of style and voice. Style may be one of the most difficult concepts for student writers to grasp. As Anne Gere states, "Style is difficult to define, as we can recognize it much more easily than we can explain it" (290). I have read dozens of definitions and explanations of style, yet it continues to evade an explicit definition. Tone, voice, persona, structure, genre, and rhetorical strategies are all concepts closely associated with style. Style and voice are what make words and ideas one's own. Creative Imitation is designed to help students intuitively grasp the concept of style and to develop a style of their own. I present Creative Imitation as an option, as one of many strategies to be used in the

⁸If you want, at this point, to see the outline of Creative Imitation, it is included in the conclusion section of the thesis. I will not go into a detailed explanation and analysis of Creative Imitation at this point; first I want to provide the theoretical and historical background a teacher would need in order to judge whether he would like to try writing by imitation with his students.

I began using the term "creative imitation" before I came across it in anyone else's work; subsequently I have found that Frank D'Angelo uses this term for the type of imitation he encourages (Process 302).

writing classroom. I will discuss the benefits of writing by imitation as well as the drawbacks.

Creative Imitation is a form of close stylistic imitation that explicitly connects the products of writing to the processes of writing. This connection is encouraged by the teacher modeling the operations of imitation, that are, in most respects, similar to the operations of composition. The student should come to see that writing by imitation is a process and that understanding how the process works is as important as the writing produced through the process.

The purpose of the modeling and the writing by imitation is to enable students to internalize forms and processes of writing to maximize their options in their own writing:

The ultimate goal of all imitation exercises, however, is eventually to cut the student loose from his models equipped with the confidence and resources to go it on his own. (Corbett, CRMS 538)...[as] stated by Quintilian: "For what object have we in teaching them but that they may not always be required to be taught.

(Corbett, "Imitation" 305)

Imitation acts as a bridge from the model to a student's own writing. Writing by imitation can help students to link

what they know, their personal and researched knowledge--to what they don't know, how to effectively communicate that experience and knowledge to an audience.

Writing by imitation should include a combination of the following operations (and probably several I omitted): reading, analyzing, discussing, recognizing analogies, abstracting, daydreaming, planning, prewriting, drafting, discussing, sharing, revising, and editing.

In order for the technique of close stylistic imitation (see Appendix A) to become a successful writing strategy, the operational processes must be made explicit--in my view the most effective way to achieve this is for the teacher and students to do imitations together in class or in conferences. During my research I found that--although imitation is not an integral part of current composition pedagogy--models are commonly used, and using writing models is a form of imitation. Many composition rhetorics, most readers used in writing courses, and many composition courses do incorporate the principles of imitation (more explicit definition of imitation terms in next section). However, teachers rarely take the time to explain imitation or emulation explicitly; at first this surprised me, until I realized that perhaps imitation/emulation is so unconsciously accepted as an intrinsic, "natural" pedagogic procedure

that educators usually do not see the need to explain how imitation and emulation relate to writing.

I do not think that I have ever been in a writing course where models have not been used. A wide variety of models has been offered: traditional masters, contemporary professional/technical, and student writing (accomplished and problematic). Nor have I ever been in a writing course in which a process for imitating/emulating⁹ these writing models has been made explicit. (The next section Definition of Writing by Imitation will expand on the types of imitation.) An instructor has never demonstrated in class the operations of emulation from processes to product--thinking aloud, composing with the students--explaining how and why imitation is being used. Teachers appear to believe that we learn from models almost by "osmosis." Expose us to the desirable pattern of writing, and we will magically internalize the process.

Even in courses in which we did explicit imitation exercises, we never discussed how we did the imitations, the

⁹The distinction between imitation and emulation is often a slender one. Imitation generally carries a connotation of copying closely, and emulation a looser copying--do "in the manner of." Writing by imitation encompasses both senses of copying, keeping in mind that emulation is a more creative form of imitation. Emulation is creative imitation. However, writing by imitation transforms imitation into a creative activity.

Barbara Dickinson clarifies the generative sense of emulation: moving on to create something on one's own (8, 286).

rationale behind doing imitation exercises, nor how imitation fit in with other writing exercises or the goal of writing instruction in general. The instructions for the assignment were to follow the structure and style of the sentences or paragraphs, changing only the content or subject matter. Miraculously our imitations appeared, some clumsy, some creatively capturing both the structure and the flavor of the original. The what was demonstrated; the how was left to our imagination. It is fine to challenge the imagination. My concern is: if students do not understand how they produce a certain passage of writing, what they learn from the creation process will not transfer into their future writing.

Although writing by imitation--assignments or exercises in which the student is guided (often indirectly) to base his or her writing on a model text--continues to be a part of many composition classrooms, the operational processes of writing by imitation are rarely made explicit through explanations, examples, or modeling. Often teachers introduce a mode of writing--for example, persuasive argument, then read and analyze a professional or student sample, and proceed to an assignment in which the student is to create a persuasive argument of his own, all the while assuming that the student will follow the pattern in the

writing model but neglecting to teach the students how to do this. D. G. Kehl describes this implicit use of imitation:

...omission or neglect of...Imitatio--often leaves the student, and sometimes the teacher himself, confused about the relationship between what is read for Monday and Wednesday and what is written for Friday's theme. All too often in the teaching of composition there is this missing connection. Many composition teachers seem to think that if students read effective writing and perhaps spend fifty minutes discussing its content, they should be able to write better on the next theme. But somewhere between the act of writing the theme there must come not only the observance of effective use of rhetorical strategies in achieving particular effects but also the practical application to one's own writing. This application can be aided by Imitatio, the process by which the student-writer seeks to emulate effective strategies of style to achieve his own purpose. (136)

For example, one of the textbooks analyzed in Appendix D, Writing in the Liberal Arts Tradition: A Rhetoric with Readings, includes many samples, student and professional. However, there is no explicit explanation nor demonstration

of the specific connection between the examples (which I maintain are being presented as writing models) and a student's own writing. The authors write about the students patterning their writing on the examples; however, it appears to be assumed that what students learn through reading and textual analysis will transfer to their own writing. What is supposed to transfer, and how does transference occur? This is only one of many questions to be answered about the use of imitation in the composition classroom.

Most composition is the production of patterns. Writing by imitation is the reproduction of patterns. It may be that most writing is the reproduction of patterns. A subject of pedagogical debate is the long-range effect of teaching students to reproduce patterns: to imitate. Imitation is a pervasive way of teaching in our society and culture. Education, from child-rearing to surgeon-training, is based on the principles of imitation. Because we grow up constantly imitating those around us, perhaps it is assumed that we will automatically internalize the readings (i.e., writing models) and examples in the composition class. How we internalize texts and author identity, and whether that benefits or limits the development of a student's own voice in her writing, is a question I will examine in the thesis.

Definition of Writing by Imitation

What is imitation? What happens during the act of imitation? What is writing by imitation? Imitation means to adopt observed behaviors, to do what others are doing, or have done. It is far from easy to define imitation. Imitation is a concept as stated above, but this concept informs a multitude of imitation techniques and genres. James Shimabukuro, who wrote a dissertation based on an empirical investigation of student imitations of model essay subjects, concludes that: "Imitation is a complex cognitive activity. Rather than a single act that either does or does not occur, it is perhaps best thought of as a range of unique operations that share a common bond" (55). Over the years there have been many writing techniques based on imitation: copying a text, translation, paraphrase, precis, summary, and parody (for a more complete list see Appendix B). Imitation itself ranges from close imitation where the structure is copied and some of the same words or phrases are used, to "in the style of" where some aspect of the text is loosely emulated.

Samuel Johnson in his mammoth A Dictionary of the English Language, defines two types of imitation: the first is the act of copying, the attempt to resemble, which in writing would be called close imitation. The second is emulation: to imitate with hope of equality, or superior

excellence...to rival...to propose as one to be equalled or excelled. Writing by imitation encompasses the sense of copying and of emulating. We copy the operations,¹⁰ the processes, the strategies of the writing model, and the teacher who models the imitation process, but we also emulate--aspire to equal or rival--the style, "authentic" voice, and identity of the models we imitate.

Related to the operations of writing processes, there are many possible applications of imitation: content, arrangement, structure, style, voice, persona, audience, strategies, to name a few. A student writer can imitate an experienced writer's text (product), or the way an experienced writer approaches the processes of writing: techniques for getting started, generation of ideas and materials, organizational strategies, revision, and editing.

Writing by imitation, as later demonstrated and further defined by the schema for Creative Imitation, is a close stylistic imitation of expository prose (student and professional models used in college composition courses), and an emulation of the instructor who models how to compose through an imitation process. In an imitation process we abstract the composing strategies that inform the

¹⁰ I have adopted Roen's use of "operations," rather than "steps" or "stages," to remind us that composing is not linear, but recursive (68).

style of the writing model and use those strategies as a base as we carry out the composing operations to write on a subject of our own. Creative Imitation, the writing by imitation method in the last section of the thesis, is an imitation process incorporating the principles of imitation/emulation (principles of adopting observed behavior) into composing operations in order to guide students to an awareness of how they compose and maximize their writing options.

To use imitative techniques effectively, instructors must emphasize the concept of "being based on" a model. Writing by imitation is not simply copying--guiding the student to adopt the style and structure of the model to convey a context and purpose the student has chosen as compatible to the model's style and structure--it is an identity with what an author has attempted to achieve in writing. Ideally the writing model will (with the added assistance of the classroom instructor process modeling) become a teacher, a guide, on whom the student can depend. An author will come off the page to support and guide the student in a new writing experience. Identity with the text and the writing instructor does not happen fortuitously; it depends on a carefully selected writing model, appropriate for the developmental level of the student, and a teacher who can skillfully demonstrate the operations of imitation

(and composition) processes. In addition to the appropriate selection of writing models (which could certainly mean that the student chooses his own model) and the teacher's effective process modeling, it depends on: clear, relevant assignments; formative evaluations; and a range of intangibles, such as love of writing and teaching.

A student bases his or her writing on a text as a way of focusing and structuring words and ideas. The imitation strategies are scaffolding to provide a base and support while the student learns, internalizes, and creates her own writing. Just as scaffolding is not kept up indefinitely, but only as long as needed, imitation has a limited, temporary function in the composition classroom. The choice of subject matter and the adaptation of the student's context to the structure of the model are new acts of creation. Imitating a contemporary, carefully selected model--after the teacher has competently demonstrated the operations involved in a process of imitation--can help a writer develop an awareness of usage and of rhetorical strategies:

What is imitated is not merely the form or structure of the original model, but more importantly, the grammatical and rhetorical principles that underlie the structure of the model. These principles are the elements that

model the writer's cognitive processes. They are analogs of the composing process. (D'Angelo, "Imitation" 173)

There is a closeness, an under-standing achieved through the imitation process, that does not come about from reading and analyzing alone. When a student has done a close imitation of a text, the structure and style become part of his writing background.

From the nonfiction writing courses I have taken in college, I learned that when we experiment with new genres and techniques, imitation exercises can provide us with an important transition strategy, enabling us to move from the model to our own writing style and personal voice. Students in my classes reported that writing by imitation decreased the anxiety some of them experienced when faced with a new genre or type of writing. It was as though the model became an intimate support for the student. In addition, the sense of identification engendered by the imitation process can paradoxically encourage the student to develop a writing voice of her own. (This argument will be extended in the section The Paradox of Imitation).

Rationale for Writing by Imitation

I suggest that writing by imitation supports and

satisfies the following priorities of current writing pedagogy:

1. Imitation supports the writing-as-process model while making effective use of the written product. (This point will not be elaborated here as it is covered in other sections.)
2. Imitation reinforces the reading-writing-thinking connection that is important for students to perceive and apply when attempting to improve their writing. Writing by imitation entails careful reading, abstracting concepts and strategies from the text as we construct meaning, putting them to use in thinking through the composing operations, and then writing based on the reading and mental composing.
3. Writing by imitation can be a student-centered strategy to motivate writing and guide students to greater awareness of how they and other writers compose.

It is this third point that I will expand as I suggest that it is one of the most important rationales for the use of writing by imitation in the composition classroom. Names of instructors who have experimented with specific techniques are in parenthesis. This rationale is speculative in nature. Empirical research is necessary to

test the validity of these claims. Writing by imitation can be student-centered in the following ways:

- a. Imitation exercises can be personalized to individual students. (Eschholz)
- b. The imitation process can be collaborative and peer interactional. (Clines)
- c. The class is a built-in audience; this answers the rhetorical objective of writing to a specific audience.
- d. Imitation can encourage and adapt to class discussion.
- e. Writing by imitation can enable students to walk before they run: make use of the writing model and process modeling so they do not always, as beginners, have to focus on all the parameters of writing at once.
- f. Imitation is a transition device, a scaffolding, to hold the edifice (their writing) in place while working on it.
- g. Students have the opportunity to try on and retain or discard writing strategies and styles.
- h. Writing by imitation can help students build trust in their intuitions as they successfully match their ideas and knowledge to the form or structure of the model.
- i. There is a strong motivational component in writing by imitation. The exercises can be short and easy, encouraging more successful writing activity. Imitation is a way of playing with and through language that can be fun and challenging.
- j. Imitation enables identification with an author. It develops an intimate relationship with another writer, and as the teacher models writing by imitation, students observe how an interaction with the text is established.

Summary and Plan for the Remaining Sections

This first section has served to state the problem being investigated: the challenge of teaching writing to college composition students. Writing by imitation has been proposed as an effective strategy to encourage and improve student writing. However, writing by imitation, defined as creative imitation, will become an effective teaching/learning strategy only if the operational processes are made explicit so the students can understand how they compose. The challenge has been put into the context of current pedagogical writing theory. I have made suggestions as to some aspects of a rationale for imitation methods.

The remainder of the thesis is organized into three sections:

1. A review of the related literature which will further define and context writing by imitation. The history of the uses of imitation in the writing classroom will be traced, as well as what has been called a "revival" of imitation. Testimony in favor of and in opposition to imitation will be reviewed. This section will also examine some of the literature on writing models and what some authors have called "the paradox of imitation."

2. A description of two survey projects that further examine the context of imitation/emulation in the composition classroom. The first project was a questionnaire distributed to Freshman Composition instructors. In the second, I analyzed the textbooks considered by the University of Arizona Composition Program for the most recent adoption, 1987-88.

3. The final section, Conclusions and Recommendations, will include the Creative Imitation schema, a description of process modeling, suggestions and implications for teachers using writing by imitation, and recommendations for further theoretical and empirical investigations into the uses of imitation in the composition classroom.

II. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Introduction

The literature review is divided into five categories. First to be reviewed is literature related to the history of writing by imitation. Second, the revival of imitation is outlined. Third is a review of the objections to imitation. The fourth section pertains to models and imitation. The last section reviews the paradox of imitation.

The History of Imitation

For centuries a method labeled "imitation" was used to teach writing (Corbett, "Imitation" 243-45). This method was made up of multiple activities: copying (including memorizing and reciting to internalize the rhythms of language) summary, paraphrasing, imitation of contents or arrangement, and stylistic imitation. Isocrates, Quintilian, and Cicero are among the teachers associated with the classical Greco-Roman tradition of rhetoric from which we inherited imitatio as a basic technique. Edward P. J. Corbett elaborates on the use of imitation to develop a student's appreciation of style:

Classical rhetoric books are filled with testimonies about the value of imitation for the

refinement of the many skills involved in effective speaking or writing. Style is, after all, the most imitable of the skills that cooperate to produce effective discourse. (CRMS 496)

As James Murphy describes one process used by Quintilian: the student hears the master read or speak; the student responds by speaking or writing, first to imitate then to create a version of his own to read aloud or memorize (6). I would underline that the purpose of imitatio was not simply to copy a master, but to enable the student to internalize conventional language and then most importantly create a version of his own.

Memorizing, translating, paraphrasing, imitating were all important pedagogic activities during the Renaissance. Many writers, Shakespeare and Milton included, attest to the value of imitation for improving their writing, even for teaching them to write. Burton Hatlen summarizes:

The pedagogies born in ancient Greece were redacted and passed on first by Roman and then by Medieval and Renaissance theorists and teachers, and all these heirs of the Greek rhetorical tradition gave imitation a central place....And with the Renaissance, the emphasis which pedagogical theorists placed on imitation seemed, if anything, to increase. (61)

He defines imitation as "the central pedagogical principle in all rhetorical instruction down to our century" (61).

The writing tradition in England was based on the Greco-Roman principles of classical rhetoric in which imitatio played a major role. The American tradition was based on Anglo-Greco-Roman principles.¹¹ Murphy notes that the early 1900s were a pivotal point in American pedagogy: a change from the classical principles to a skills orientation based on "modern" principles(8). This move away from rhetorical principles was a move away from imitation as the foundation of pedagogic methodology. A philosophical movement called the "New Rhetoric" was developing also and opposed the use of writing by imitation (those criticisms have been included in the Objections to Imitation section of the thesis). During the 60s and 70s some teachers--for example, Judy and Moffett--were opposing imitation and the heavy use of prose models, while others--such as Gorden, Weathers, and Whitten--were publishing books devoted to sentence, paragraph, and stylistic imitation.

Then, perhaps concomitant with the climate which led to the change in pedagogic focus from product to process (Hairston), imitation exercises waned. In an article on

¹¹Barbara Dickenson's recent dissertation provides an excellent base for understanding the evolution of imitation methods. For a more complete analysis of the American tradition and imitation see the Rodd article.

"Inventive Modeling," Kenneth Roemer writes about "the gradual trend away from modeling as a primary means of teaching composition" (767). He reports growing "direct and indirect criticism of modeling," as the attention shifts away from arrangement to focus on invention and discovery. Imitation came into disfavor. Imitation was not generally attacked--but, perceived to be a part of the old product paradigm, it was ignored and passed over for writing instruction more in step with writing as process. Frank D'Angelo contends that it is a pseudo-distinction to restrict imitation to a product conception of writing when it can serve to unite the products and processes of writing in the student's understanding:

The imitation of models suggests a product approach to the teaching of writing, whereas a heuristic approach puts the emphasis on the process. This seeming dichotomy is not a real one, however, for the imitation of models mediates between process and product. ("Imitation" 173)

Unfortunately the imitation of models has not been presented in a manner that would mediate between processes and products. The intention to do so, and making explicit how to do so, is one of the goals of my thesis.

The Revival of Imitation

In the 1960s, Edward P.J. Corbett and Frank D'Angelo began writing about the beneficial uses of writing by imitation. Corbett's chapter in Gary Tate's Teaching Composition: 10 Bibliographical Essays generated interest in writing by imitation. In addition to several journal articles about writing by imitation, both Corbett and D'Angelo wrote textbooks that included imitation as a prominent writing strategy. Many teachers--for example Phyllis Brooks, Tony Magistrale, and Jeffery Sommers--have come forth during the 70s and 80s with success stories about writing by imitation. These teachers are willing to argue that imitation exercises and assignments do fit into the "new" (student-centered) pedagogy and the "new" (process) paradigm. Imitation can be a part of the instruction of writing as process; it can be fully integrated as a method using invention techniques, drafting, revision, and editing--as the most widely accepted model of the writing process, that of Hayes and Flower, describes the composing schema.

In 1984, Ken Davis, editor of an issue of the Kentucky English Bulletin entitled "Writing by Imitation," wrote:

Imitation, a classical technique for the teaching and learning of composition, is having an exciting

revival, as teachers of both "creative" and "expository writing," at all levels, are exploring new uses of models. (2)

Not all educators are as enthusiastic as Davis about writing by imitation. Burton Hatlen attempts a reconciliation between the New Rhetoricians, who have "thrown the baby (imitation) out with the bath water," and both classical rhetoric and the neo-classical rhetoricians. The title of his article tells us what he has in mind: "Old Wine and New Bottles." Hatlen explains that the New Rhetoricians--for him this includes Ken Macrorie, Peter Elbow, Ann Berthoff, and emphatically C.H. Knoblauch and Lil Brannon--"see imitation as belonging to an older pedagogy which [they] have rejected" (67). Whereas the neo-classical rhetoricians--represented mainly by Edward P.J. Corbett and Frank D'Angelo--"have attempted to reconceive classical rhetoric...to make it functional within the modern classroom, and in these neo-classical rhetorics imitation continues to occupy an honored place" (67).

Hatlen found himself in a state of "cognitive dissonance" because theoretically he aligned himself with the proponents of the New Rhetoric but:

My lingering interest in imitation as a pedagogical procedure eventually led me to try out some imitation exercises in my writing classes,

and they proved remarkably successful. The writing of students...regularly took on a new force and focus when I began the writing sequence by reading with them a powerful exemplary text...the rhetorical theory which I had espoused apparently couldn't account for the success of this new (to me, but of course actually very old) pedagogical procedure. (69)

He identifies the issue of models as one of the pivotal differences between Old and New Rhetoric. Writing by imitation is based on models and thereby becomes part of this issue.

Dialectical Rhetoric is the name Hatlen gives to his system:

...I propose a via media: a rhetoric which will see the relationship between the antecedent form and the individual act of creation as truly dialectical, a breathing in of one or more exemplary texts, and a breathing out of something new, remade. In such a Dialectical Rhetoric the issue of imitation will obviously occupy a central place. (79)

It is this dialectical movement I have tried to characterize in the teaching strategy of Creative Imitation. The student bases herself on a text in order to build something new.

The student bases herself on a process: the teacher modeling how to imitate a text--incorporating invention, drafting, and revision--in order to identify with other authors and how they have learned to write. As Hatlen concludes, "A dialectical perspective allows us to see imitation not simply as a mechanical reproduction of certain external patterns of organization but as a dynamic process in which the writer introjects and remakes formal structures" (79).

Kenneth Roemer advocates the use of imitation as an invention strategy, as part of the heuristics of discovery. Roemer uses N. Scott Momaday's book, The Way to Rainy Mountain to introduce writing to students "as a dynamic process that links thinking, reading, writing and rewriting, and as a useful means of increasing student motivation to discover and experiment imaginatively with effective methods of invention" (770). His students do "close imitations" of Momaday not in order to produce a similar product, but in order "to develop heuristic procedures" that will improve their inventive strategies and their writing in general. Roemer understands and answers many of the criticisms directed at the use of imitation by New Rhetoricians and by teachers advocating an emphasis on invention and discovery. He admits to weaknesses and misuse of modeling and imitation in the past, but...and that is an emphatic BUT, he

contends that imitation works and works effectively for his students.

Roemer, like many other teachers, came to believe in the value of imitation when he saw its positive impact on the writing of his composition students, "...if teachers select models carefully and present them not as 'finished last words' or 'remote masterpieces' but as paradigms of dynamic processes and as hints leading to avenues of discovery, then modeling can and will contribute significantly to contemporary composition courses" (769).

Phyllis Brooks and Jeffery Sommers are two other teachers who document success in using writing by imitation with their students. Both have written articles detailing the theoretical and practical rationale for using imitation with their students. They find their use of imitation to be an incentive for their students to write more and an effective method to teach the subtleties of grammar and rhetoric.

Phyllis Brooks suggests that college teachers who want to improve the style of their students' writing should update the old methods of teaching students to imitate and paraphrase:

If English teachers at the university level are supposed to be adding some new element, some sophistication, some elegance to the

prose of their students, and not just making up for real or imagined deficiencies in teaching in high schools, they must continually seek new methods and resurrect into a more glorious life some old ones.

(212)

Brooks designs an imitation exercise she names persona paraphrase and by which she hopes to guide students to imitate and learn from the voice and sentence patterns of a particular writer. Imitation provides a temporary support for the student:

The structure of the paraphrase, rather than limiting student imagination, provides the crutch that makes it possible for him to give his imagination free rein, without the worry about how to finish a sentence he has once started. The paraphrase, since it is such a close copy structurally of a polished original, rarely shows any mechanical errors. The student used to getting back an essay covered with marking often looks at his first persona paraphrase with an expression of complete disbelief. He has produced a piece of writing he can be proud of. And it is his.

Although he had a skeleton to build on, the flesh is all his own. (216)

Brooks concludes that by using a structural model and guiding the student to an appropriate subject matter, the student produces, not only this piece of writing she or he can be proud of, but at the same time learns about style, precision, syntax, word choice, and the other technical details of writing. I would only suggest that Brooks incorporate brainstorming and the explicit process of the teacher modeling the steps of imitation in front of the class.

Jeffrey Sommers uses imitation to spark originality and an authentic voice in the papers of students in his freshman writing courses:

Perhaps the best explanation for the absence of an "authentic voice"...in much student writing is that most students have a very low level of awareness of the rhetorical situation which informs their writing [awareness of audience, writing purpose, one's attitude toward the subject]...I stumbled onto the use of models as an effective means of teaching my students about rhetorical situations. (36)

After reading about his method, it is clear that Sommers' success is a result of the well-organized process he teaches his students. His article closes with a summary of his rationale for using imitation:

But underlying all of the modeling remains one basic assumption: good writing is writing which demonstrates an authentic voice. Where I had once believed that students had first to learn how to be aware of audience, purpose, and subject in order to develop a voice, I am now convinced that they can imitate a voice and thus learn to be aware of audience, purpose, and subject through the very act of modeling. Increased awareness then leads, I believe to more--and original--authentic voices in the student's subsequent writing. In short, the student becomes a better writer. (42)

I will further discuss this concept of authentic voice in the section on the paradox of imitation. Not only have Brooks and Sommers found that imitation can help students become better writers, but also that imitating carefully selected models has enabled students to understand and enjoy the process of writing.

The process of writing by imitation can be useful to students because the exercises and assignments given to teach writing as process hold little meaning for students who have no idea what the traditional, conventional writing product might look like. What is a descriptive or persuasive essay? What is a valid argument? Students must be able to visualize, to conceive, what it is they want to write, before they can write it. It is very unlikely that a carpenter who had never seen a chest of drawers would suddenly be able to build one. It is difficult for a student, a beginner in any field, to produce anything new without a model. Burton Hatlen echoes this thought: "I'm proposing, then, that none of us could write at all without having some sort of notion, however inchoate, of what sort of thing we are setting out to make" (80).

As I stated earlier, the articles written in support of the principles and practices of imitation continue to grow. I cannot report on all of them; teachers may refer to the list of references for articles by the following proponents: William E. Gruber, Elizabeth Cooper, Tony Magistrale, Lynn Neil, Janice Thaddeus, Eric Walborn, and Winston Weathers.

Objections to Writing by Imitation

Although I have already mentioned some objections and concerns about the use of imitation, this section will be devoted to the consideration of several specific objections and to teachers who have stated these objections. We will begin with an objection voiced by Stephen Judy because his analysis of the writing processes--especially as related to the process of discovery--caused me to rethink all that I had previously concluded about writing by imitation.

In an essay he wrote for Eight Approaches to Teaching Composition, Judy discusses the relation between structure and content in writing. He contends that structure and form should evolve organically from the subject matter (41). The creative movement in writing is from within to without. He objects to techniques, such as imitation, where the structure or form is provided in advance and the student is expected to do little more than pour in the content. The student is robbed of that crucial experience of finding or creating for herself the structure or form to fit the subject matter--of discovering the organic relationship between content and form.

If we take this criticism seriously--and Judy's observations do form a cogent criticism of the use of

writing models, thereby including the use of imitation-- are we led to conclude that imitation exercises might teach students to improve their writing (at the point where they are) but not help them to progress and become better writers over all? This relates to the question of transference. If a student does produce a better piece of writing through the use of imitation, will that improvement transfer to subsequent papers she writes?

My answers to the concern that the form and structure should follow organically from the content would be, first, that the problem with transference of learning is inherent in all teaching methodology. It is difficult to document transference; often it is short-term. Secondly, students can benefit from both types of writing experiences: those during which they discover the form in the content, and those incorporating the principles of imitation in which they use a given form to generate a new creative development of their subject for themselves. I do not see the teaching of writing as a choice between mutually exclusive alternatives, but rather what I call an eclectic approach: selecting from among the many available strategies those that will meet the needs of specific students. I suggest that exercises in stylistic imitation can help students become aware of the range of variables

available to them and perhaps even encourage them to create their own.

In the prior section, *The Revival of Imitation*, Burton Hatlen analyzed the objections of the New Rhetoricians--especially Knoblauch and Brannon--to writing by imitation. Hatlen attempts, as I do through the re-creation of a classically based strategy that I name Creative Imitation, to recycle or re-create the principles of imitatio into a writing heuristic for students and teachers. Knoblauch and Brannon maintain that this recycling is not feasible and is to be rigorously discouraged:

Since different attitudes about discourse arise from different rhetorical traditions, and since the teaching of writing is affected by those attitudes, we regard the blending of ancient and modern concepts as confusing and unproductive (21)...classrooms continue to attempt artificial resuscitation of a view of composition long ago separated from the epistemological atmosphere that had once supported it. (23)

There will always be evolution in composition theory and practices. That the epistemology has evolved, does not require we discard all of the methodology and practices associated with it. True, it may be necessary to implement

adjustments and new methodology, but that is part of the creativity of teaching; it does not imply an inherent weakness in the processes. Once again it is made clear that in a student-centered writing pedagogy, it can be counter-productive to base oneself entirely on one epistemological criterion at the expense of what educators see to be working effectively for their students.

Models and Imitation

I am not suggesting in this thesis that students imitate "masterpieces" (though occasionally that can be challenging and creative), but that the students be presented with contemporary, nonfiction prose passages that are appropriate to their cognitive development, typical of what they could grow to achieve, and perhaps of special interest because they exemplify a form, style, usage etc. that the student is having difficulty with. I thoroughly agree that to imitate a masterpiece simply because consensus has decreed it so, makes no sense pedagogically and can actually be counter-productive to the student's progress in writing.

There is an on-going controversy over whether or not to use models in writing classes, what types of models to

use, and even at what point in the instructional process to introduce the models (Eschholz 22-36).

In an attempt to focus totally on the process of writing, especially the aspect of discovery through writing, some composition teachers, Eschholz for example, have limited the use of models in their classrooms. This echoes the concerns of Stephen Judy about the form "naturally" evolving from the content or subject.

Another problem with the use of models is that we expect students to write "right" (perfect) too soon. We deny the importance of them learning from their own mistakes. Almost every experienced writer could have an improved product by imitating a classical piece of writing (and they do that from time to time), but a serious writer would not want to do that regularly. Selective, appropriate, and limited use of imitation will allow us to reap its benefits without undermining the advantages of a student learning from trial and error.

During the past two decades, there has been a trend of moving away from the classic literary texts as models, to more contemporary expository models. The concern has been two-fold: classical models tend to frustrate the students because they have little hope of achieving anything comparable, and secondly, the use of classical

models focuses on the product of writing as opposed to the processes.

James Moffett states the first concern in this way:

...there is no evidence that analyzing how some famous writer admirably dispatched a problem will help a student recognize and solve his writing problems...models don't help writing and merely intimidate some students by implying a kind of competition in which they are bound to lose. (208)

In an attempt to avoid this "intimidation," some writing classes use student writing as models, the rationale being that students are not intimidated, but rather motivated, by knowing someone similar to themselves achieved a well-written paper.

Debra Pearson addresses the second concern about models and imitation:

I no longer ask students for strict imitations of such models, primarily because the models do little to make them consciously aware that writing is a process. Giving a student a polished model to imitate is analogous to presenting him with a well-made shoe, handing him the parts of the shoe's mate, and asking him to construct a shoe of his own by studying the

finished product. Prose models show students what to aim for, but they do not show them how to get there. (56)

Erika Lindemann echoes this objection when she points out that teachers using imitation often focus on the product at the expense of the process they need to be teaching:

The teacher explains the form, presents several models or examples of it, and gives students opportunities to analyze and imitate the models. The approach assumes that, by imitation, students will internalize the forms and begin to use them on their own...Forms practiced by rote or imitation may not become internalized, especially if the teacher explains only what the form is but not how to reproduce it. (242)

I would argue that the Pearson metaphor is not an accurate representation of what students are asked to do in contemporary writing by imitation assignments. True, the student is asked to create a shoe, but rather than a matching mate--it is a new and different shoe the student is asked to create. If the name of the game, or art if you prefer, is to create a shoe, then a model guides the student. In writing by imitation the model is presented as a guide to a process, not as a product for "servile copying."

Though Pearson is against the teaching of writing by imitation of models, it is a technique similar to her process modeling schema that I have incorporated into the strategy of Creative Imitation. I suggest that process modeling and writing by imitation are mutually supportive strategies that have a synergistic effect on a student's ability to improve his writing and his understanding of writing as product and process.

Not all texts are equally imitable: selecting appropriate writing models is a factor crucial to the success of the imitation exercise. A writing model must be appropriate to the assignment, to the type of writing that is being encouraged, and to the particular group of students.

Through experience and extensive reading about imitation, I have come to believe that the best model for imitation is a passage that could be characterized as self-contained: a passage of writing that forms a whole unto itself and tells a brief story or outlines a complete argument on its own. Frank D'Angelo calls this quality "relatively complete in itself" (Process 303). Other factors that indicate a profitably imitable model might be: a salient style, distinctive diction, a plain style, a variety of sentence types, a clear voice or distinctive persona presented, and a content that would

interest the target group. I have heard comments from students about the difficulty of women imitating "male" writing, minority students imitating mainstream "Anglo" writing, and from students in general about the difficulty of imitating a style that is too elaborate.

Choosing the appropriate model is an art that students and teachers will acquire through practice and experimentation. One teacher uses individualized imitation assignments, introduced during conferences, to meet the students' specific needs (Eschholz 30-36). He keeps a file of models that he has introduced successfully to help students overcome specific difficulties.

When a teacher has made the decision to use models for emulation or imitation, and has chosen, or had the students choose, the kind of writing model to present--he still must decide during which operation to introduce the model. The most traditional approach is to present the model at the beginning, during what is called the prewriting operation. The model helps the student through invention and focuses prewriting, also providing a base for drafting from the very beginning of the assignment. However, several teachers (for example, Clines) insist that it is better to present the model after the discovery and prewriting stage is completed and use "professional" models only at the revision stage, not for prewriting or

drafting. Roemer, on the other hand, uses writing models specifically to teach the processes of invention and discovery. Raymond Clines is against the use of writing models because they do not encourage student collaboration. He contends that writing should be a more co-operative, collaborative activity. If models are used at all, it should be only before revision, not during prewriting or drafting (4).

My suggestion is to vary presenting the model during different operations the writing processes; experiment to determine what works best for your students. It is probable that students will learn something different, but equally valuable, by varying when the model is presented. This would be an interesting empirical study--to compare the differences in student compositions based on when a writing model is introduced. In the process I present here, Creative Imitation, the model to be imitated is presented at the beginning of the assignment, but I do encourage varying that presentation.

The Paradox of Imitation

Several researchers have remarked on what I will call the "paradoxical" aspect of writing by imitation. By this is meant that students doing imitation exercises are able to

create a more authentic voice in their own writing (Sommers 36). Other teachers call this a "writing voice," a "personal voice."¹² Peter Elbow ties the concept of real voice to imitation: "Real voice is whatever yields resonance,...some writers get real voice through...imitation of utterly different writers...It may be possible to get real voice by merging in your mind with another personality, pretending to be someone else (313). Teachers report that through imitation, which is strongly akin to copying, students learn how to write in a voice that is noticeably their own. The idea is counter-intuitive.

It does appear paradoxical that by imitating the voice and style of others a student can find his own writing voice. That sometimes he learns more about his own writing by concentrating on that of others. However, by analyzing and understanding what another writer has done and then putting that awareness to work in an imitation, he is sometimes able to transfer that understanding into his own writing.

It perhaps seemed feasible that students could transfer rhetorical awareness and strategies from imitating

¹²Sheridan Baker gives this advice to students: "Good writing should have a voice, and the voice should be unmistakably your own..It should be alive with a human personality--yours--which is probably the most persuasive rhetorical voice on earth. (Select Biblio. 7)

a model text, and we sigh in relief when we are told that there is evidence of grammatical awareness transferring, but how do we explain that students seem to develop an "authentic" voice while imitating someone else's writing? We can get some help in understanding how this paradoxical "extra" comes about if we focus on the act and context of writing by imitation.

We have assumed that it is the text, the words on the page that the students are imitating. But it is really much more than that. If most of the steps I outline in the Creative Imitation process are carried out, then the students are modeling a process that includes understanding and internalizing: a writing pattern, the strategies and "personas" of the author of the writing model and of the teacher modeling the process, who thereby becomes an author too. Most important, the students are building an identity within themselves, an intimacy with the printed word and the author of that word.

Authentic voice is not an easily definable quality of writing. Donald Stewart writes:

What is an authentic voice and how does one acquire it: Why is it so important?...an authentic voice is the natural and inevitable consequence of a process of self-discovery....It is a kind of revelation in which you not only begin to see

yourself through the eyes of others, but also
acquire a fundamental sense of individuality.

(Select Biblio. 8)

This process parallels what I have depicted as happening in emulation. The student first sees through "the eyes of others"--writes through the voice of others, imitating the style and structure--in order to learn the process of creating in his own voice. As I have mentioned earlier, how this transference occurs is mysterious. I would suggest that it is founded on a sense of identity that evolves between the student and model text, between the student and the teacher who process models her relationship to the written text.

Robert Brooke, in his article "Modeling a Writer's Identity: Reading and Imitation in the Writing Classroom," provides a cogent, convincing analysis of the intimate master/apprentice relationship that develops as the student identifies with the teacher. The teacher models writing by imitation through his or her identity with the text the class is studying. This is the type of imitation I characterized as going far beyond the imitation of a product to an identity with a writer's voice and process of creation and composition. As Brooke represents the connection of writing by imitation and process modeling:

Imitation as a learning/teaching strategy, thus,

is more concerned with the identity of the writer than the form of the text. When imitation works, it is because the student writer admires the teacher (or professional writer) enough to want to act like her. When it doesn't, ...imitation becomes an empty exercise in reduplicating sterile form.

(23)

As Brooke works out the features of his "alternative model of imitation," he provides a clue to why--paradoxical as it may seem--students can develop a personal writing voice through the imitation of other voices:

Underlying the connection between reading, writing, and imitation is a more fundamental connection between imitation and identity...By imitating those one respects, one forms aspects of one's "identity," one's public and acknowledged "sense of self."...The identity developed from a modeled identity, then, is a product of interpretation. (24)

The student, through a process of identification, interprets the writing voice of an author and then transforms this identification into an act of self-definition as writer. This identification and self-definition enables the student to establish a writing voice and become a writer.

Imitation is far from simple. Writing by imitation, if it is to encourage and guide improvements in student writing, must simultaneously present and focus on the products and processes of writing, taking into account the context of the writing act and the identities of the people involved. The identities of the individuals and the act of identifying with another person is the crucial factor in the master/apprentice relationship exemplified in writing by imitation. The ability of the student to identify with both the writing model and the teacher modeling the imitation processes, constitutes a transfer (Shimabukuro 5, 50). It is this transfer of the consciousness of identity that enables a student to develop a personal voice in her own writing.

If this is, in fact, the case--that students can develop an "authentic" voice in their writing with the help of imitation--then the argument for using writing models and process modeling in the composition classroom would be strengthened. We would add this to our list detailing the rationales for the use of imitation.

Summary

I was not able to refer to all of the books and articles I discovered about imitation methods. For the history of imitation/emulation Barbara Dickinson's dissertation is a good guide. As she points out, research

into imitation methods is in an embryonic stage (8). In one of the last sections of my thesis, Suggestions for Further Research, I have reported on three empirical studies researching imitation methods. In the following section of the thesis I will describe two survey projects I did to learn more about the attitudes and uses of imitation/emulation in teaching college composition.

III. SURVEY PROCEDURES

Introduction

Two projects are described in this section. The first project was a questionnaire designed to focus on the attitudes of composition instructors about imitation, and what they perceived to be the specific advantages or limitations of imitation in the writing classroom. The second was an analysis of composition textbooks in order to determine the implicit or explicit use of the principles of imitation to teach writing.

The Questionnaire

The purpose of the questionnaire was to find out what experience and opinions the Freshman Composition instructors (Eng 101-102) had concerning the use of imitation for teaching writing.

The questionnaire, accompanied by a cover letter explaining the purpose and giving a little background on the thesis that generated it, was placed in the English Department mailboxes of the 93 English 101 and 102 instructors for the spring 1988 semester.

Format of the Questionnaire

The questionnaire was composed of two parts, each one page in length (See Appendix C). The first page contained questions about teachers' experiences with imitation--both when they were students and as instructors--and asked them to evaluate what they perceived to be the advantages or drawbacks of writing by imitation. The second page contained eight statements about imitation with which the instructors were asked to agree strongly, agree, disagree, or disagree strongly.

Results

There were 17 questionnaires returned (19%). The answers are tabulated in Appendix C. The answers are in bold print to distinguish them from the questions.

The comments generally fell into three categories: theory, practice, and attitude. The categories correspond to the following distinctions: statements as to why in the light of specific composition theory, imitation is or is not an effective teaching strategy; the actual experience respondents had with either doing imitations themselves in their own writing or using it with their students; and although both sections on theory and

practice encompassed attitudes, I distinguished between comments of attitude that were not accompanied by theoretical or experiential examples or statements.

The short-answer section of the questionnaire revealed three basic categories of comments about the use of imitation to teach writing (for the specific comments see Appendix C):

--It is of no use, and can even be detrimental to students developing their writing. It becomes a permanent crutch and stifles personal voice. Of the total comments, 34% reflected this opinion.

Concerns were expressed that imitation doesn't teach students anything, that it frustrates students who are not yet mature enough in their own style to appreciate or recognize more sophisticated styles. One instructor answered the question as to whether he or she had been assigned imitation exercises as a student: "No, Thank God." In general, instructors who opposed imitation reported little experience using imitation.

--I know very little about the use of imitation to teach writing. This statement characterized 22% of the total comments. Several of the instructors in this group

expressed a desire to learn more about how imitation relates to the teaching of writing.

--From my experience, imitation can be an effective way to teach writing. This opinion expressed in different ways, as can be seen in Appendix C, constituted 44% of the total comments.

In general, the instructors who indicated experience with imitation, either when they were students or as writing teachers, were more likely to state that it could be an effective teaching strategy.

Conclusions

The University of Arizona Composition Program provides extensive training for the composition instructors. Since some instructors expressed a desire to use or learn more about imitation as a teaching/learning strategy--and also several said they knew nothing about imitation methods--it might be beneficial to include a workshop in the training schedule on writing by imitation or the purpose of writing models.

TEXTBOOK ANALYSIS

Introduction

The purpose of examining the textbooks was to find out how many used principles of imitation and to test the following hypothesis: many textbooks implicitly use the strategies of imitation/emulation without making the process explicit for students.

In some textbooks, writing models are presented along with the mode under study, for example, persuasion. The model is analyzed, the mode is defined, and the students are assigned or choose their own topic to develop in an essay. It appears to be assumed that students will base or pattern their efforts along the lines of the sample, but students are rarely taught how to do this. It also seems to be assumed that students know how to transfer the organizational and stylistic features of the models into their own writing.

I suggest that this is rarely the case and that for samples or models to serve a positive purpose in the writing classroom, the processes of writing by imitation (or emulation) must be explained and modeled at least once so the students will have an explicit idea of how they can learn from writing models. This explication is done not to

encourage students to imitate other writing, but to demonstrate to them how, through reading and internalizing the work of other authors, we build from prior experience and understanding to new writing.

An analysis was conducted of the 9 writing textbooks that were considered by the University of Arizona Composition Committee when The St. Martin's Guide to Writing was adopted for 1987-88. My assumption was that these books would provide a general sample of the best textbooks used in Freshman Composition courses.

Format of the Analysis

Each of the textbooks was examined to answer the following questions:

1. Are models used? If so, are they used extensively, moderately, or to a limited degree?

2. Is imitation mentioned by name as a strategy to teach writing? If so, is it dealt with extensively, moderately, or to a limited degree?

3. Is imitation presented as a process? For example, does the discussion include suggestions for teaching prewriting, invention, drafting, and revision operations as part of imitation? If so to what degree: extensively, moderately, or to a limited degree.

4. Are the operations of an imitation process (e.g. prewriting) made explicit by modeling? Again, to what degree.

In addition, one column contains comments about any information found in the texts that was felt to be related to writing by imitation.

Results

All nine textbooks used professional or student models: three extensively, two moderately, and four to a limited degree.¹³ When I first examined the nine textbooks considered for adoption, I concluded that 4 of the books, through their heavy use of professional or student models and such phrases as "pattern their writing on" and "as a (given) author does in a (specific) passage" were in fact using the principles of imitation/emulation to teach writing, although only 3 of the authors actually referred to imitation/emulation as such. Two of the textbooks presented imitation as a process (detailed how invention, drafting, or revision was part of writing by imitation). Only one of the texts

¹³The methods of determining categories here is an area I would improve and refine for any future study. The judgments are admittedly subjective and open to alternate interpretation. I first scanned all 9 texts to find the one that made most extensive use of models (Axelrod) and the one that made least use of models (Flower) and categorized the others in respect to these two.

explicitly modeled how to imitate--this was the Gere textbook which in general demonstrated an awareness of imitation/emulation methods as teaching strategies.

Although I had not originally intended to do so, I discovered that--since imitation was so often used implicitly--I also needed to examine the instructor's manual to determine if the references to and instructions about writing by imitation were made more explicit there. I was able to obtain eight of the instructor's manuals; any pertinent information is included in the comment column of Appendix D.

In addition, I examined the required manual for Freshman Composition at the University of Arizona: A Student's Guide to Freshman Composition. It relies heavily on models, samples, and examples, but what a student is expected to learn and transfer from reading and studying the models is left implicit.

Conclusions

Although all of the textbooks used models--professional or student writing--to some extent, it was rarely made clear why the models were presented and what was expected of the students in respect to them. I would suggest that in most cases the students were expected to imitate features of, or at least emulate the models, but

that was rarely made explicit. From my analysis of these nine textbooks, I would conclude that, although emulation is implicitly assumed to take place, none of the authors presented writing by imitation (neither close stylistic imitation nor emulation) as a significant pedagogic strategy.

Although few of the textbooks use imitation methods, all of them use models, some extensively.¹⁴ If students learn and transfer skills and strategies most effectively when they understand how they achieved what they did in their writing (or how to do what they are expected to do), then it would perhaps benefit teaching/learning processes to explicitly demonstrate the connections between reading, writing models, and student writing. Why are there readings in composition textbooks? Why do we read and analyze them? What are emulation and imitation? How do we apply what we learn from other authors in our own writing? What is the role of collaboration in teaching/learning composition? Can a student collaborate with a model text?

¹⁴The St. Martin's Guide to Writing clarified in the instructor's guide, the purpose of the readings: "We do not prescribe the readings as models for students to imitate; rather, we present them as representatives of the range of different forms that each kind of writing can take" (11).

Out of curiosity, I also examined the texts of the two leading proponents of re-introducing imitatio into current pedagogy: Edward P. J. Corbett and Frank D'Angelo. Corbett's Classical Rhetoric for the Modern Student has itself become a classic textbook for upper level composition courses. Since he is a proponent of writing by imitation, I wondered how his book would compare in the categories on which I analyzed the other textbooks. As would be expected there was extensive use of writing models, as well as explicit explanation and examples of how to do a close stylistic imitation. However, writing by imitation was not presented as a process, nor was there any indication of how to model imitation in the classroom situation. D'Angelo's writing textbook, Process and Thought in Composition, also makes extensive use of writing models and gives an explicit explanation of writing by imitation. In addition, D'Angelo attempts to integrate imitation into the writing-as-process paradigm, and he presents a schema of how to do writing by imitation.

I did not have an instructor's manual for Corbett's or D'Angelo's textbooks--so it was not possible for me to

determine if they suggest that the instructor model or do imitations with the students in class or in conferences, and how that should be done.

Summary

Both the instructor's survey and the textbook analysis indicated that imitation is not currently regarded as an important strategy to teach writing. Although many instructors answered that the principles of imitation could be used effectively in the composition classroom, few had actually used or were using them.

IV. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

The conclusions and recommendations in this section are speculative in nature. Although they stem from my research and the writing I did to investigate methods of teaching/learning composition with a focus on imitation methods, my project was exploratory and resulted in recommendations for further research, rather than in conclusive theoretical or empirical evidence.

From the authors I have mentioned, and from other authors and teachers too numerous to mention, I have received ideas that helped me develop a strategy I call "Creative Imitation." It is a teaching/learning strategy designed to encourage and enable students to write more often and more effectively. Close stylistic imitation is joined to teacher process modeling in an effort to render explicit the operations of writing processes. The student is guided to use a writing model to base her writing on as she learns to develop her own style and writing voice. Although I have presented the operations in a list, they occur and will be demonstrated in a recursive manner in class. For example, at some point in drafting, the class or individual students may need to return to invention techniques before

continuing, and the revision process should lead to redrafting portions of the imitation. The process modeling¹⁵ that the instructor does with the class should be purposed to demonstrate the recursive nature of writing processes. Creative Imitation is designed to be a recursive interaction, a method based on strategies that are attuned to teaching a process, not simply a series of logical steps.

Creative Imitation

Following is a process suggested for writing by imitation exercises in college composition courses; it would take a week or more of class time:

{Before doing imitation with a class it would be a good idea to discuss the difference between copying, plagiarism, and class imitations. Also, it is important to discuss the difference between a polished product, that which we present as the writing model, and the various recursive operations of writing, that we call a process.}

1. Carefully read the model text aloud as a class.
2. Help the students, through discussion, become conscious of the rhetorical strategies used:
Analyze the text.
Speculate about the audience to whom the passage is addressed.

Study the structure of the sentences and paragraphs.
Talk about the vocabulary.
Discuss tone, mood, and style.
Speculate as to the purpose of the writing.
Evaluate all above techniques.

¹⁵It is assumed that before using Creative Imitation the teacher will have established the general use of process modeling to demonstrate writing operations.

3. Have the class brainstorm subject matter and strategies for a close stylistic imitation of the text. This can be done as a class or in small groups.
4. Have the teacher demonstrate the operations carried out to create a text by imitation. The operations to be modeled will include careful reading, collaboration, invention, drafting, revision and editing. Each operation will be done in class, using student input. {Do this during the first imitation exercise and when needed thereafter.}
5. Use a centering or visual imagery exercise to focus the task and stimulate the imagination.
6. Do some free writing and use other invention heuristics.
7. Have students write a draft of their imitations. This draft should be accompanied by a brief learning log with their impressions of the writing model, the process modeling done in class, what they have tried to accomplish in their imitation and how they have tried to do that. How did their writing imitate the style, voice, or tone of the model? At this point the instructor should have a brief conference with each student.
8. Have students reread the model text for comparison.
9. Have students revise and edit their imitations.
10. Have students share their imitations in writing support groups.
11. Have students revise their work based on feedback from the group; or have them put their writing aside for a few days, then revise if necessary.
12. To emphasize revision operations, at this point the students could revise their writing by generating a different content that they believe would work in the form being studied. In their learning log they should briefly outline how the different content changed or paralleled the style, structure, and voice of their first effort.

In completing this exercise, the students will have done most of the operations usually carried out in composing. Only the organic generation of form/structure from content--an important process as Judy points out--is side-stepped by imitating the form of the model (41). Unfortunately, this organic production of form from content does not occur as often as it should in student writing. This is a goal we must aim for as writing teachers. Although Creative Imitation sacrifices this operation--it should, in the long run, improve the ability to generate form from content by helping the student to understand the interworkings of content and form.

This is the process modeling method I developed for teaching writing by imitation to college students; it is at the same time a definition of imitation as a writing process. Although the evidence thus far is speculative--teacher testimony about successes in their classrooms--perhaps the interest in imitation/emulation will lead to theoretical and empirical research into the validity of writing by imitation as a teaching/learning strategy. This process of Creative Imitation, which leads a student to base his composition on a model text and on an instructor modeling imitation processes, can be an effective tool for teaching writing. Teachers report that writing by imitation can help teach grammar, usage, and rhetorical awareness

through the act of writing. It permits students to focus their ideas and words on a pattern in order to learn about style and writing strategies.

Critics seem to forget that almost everything we learn in life we begin by imitation. The freedom to adopt (imitate) other voices can be a nonthreatening, heuristic device for freeing and developing students' own voices. Of course, we do not want students to continue to imitate indefinitely; writing by imitation is a transitional, heuristic strategy. Students must be encouraged to use it as such and move on to more interactive, critical, and dialectical strategies.

Process Modeling

In three separate articles, Harris, Pearson, and Padgett provide theoretical support and practical advice for teachers electing to use a process modeling approach in the composition classroom. Harris advises:

We need to think long and hard about showing, not telling students about composing processes. What does planning, look, feel, and sound like: what do we do when we revise? (79)...Seeing how something is done ...can demystify processes too long considered arcane. And what better way is there to convince students that writing is a process that

requires effort, thought, time and persistence than to go through all that writing, scratching out, rewriting with and for our students? (81)

Harris also contrasts the use of prose models to process modeling and asserts the superiority of process modeling because the use of prose models "requires the ability to abstract concepts from someone else's prose and transfer them into our own. How that is accomplished is only talked about not illustrated" (77). This is precisely where I see the power of combining prose models and process modeling: the higher-order cognitive skill of abstracting concepts from someone else's prose and transferring them into our own (a great definition of imitation!) is a valuable tool that, when combined with process modeling, synergistically enhances a student's ability to apply what is learned from the product and processes of another writer to his or her own writing.

Implications for the Practitioner

Although I am proposing the incorporation of Creative Imitation into the composition classroom, extensive use of imitation would not be recommended for composition students. Writing by imitation should be one of many options, to be used sparingly, in conjunction with the regular curriculum.

There might be two exceptions to this recommendation:

a. Experienced writers attempting to write in a new genre or experiment with style and voice. These would be students in the more advanced composition or literature courses.

b. English as a Second Language (ESL) students-- imitation might be especially appropriate for ESL students because they may have used it extensively in native writing acquisition. If they have become experienced writers in their native language, then writing by imitation can help them in achieving fluency in their second language.

For these two groups writing by imitation might be used more than the limited use I am recommending for standard composition students. At one point I included inexperienced writers (sometimes called basic writers) among the students who could perhaps profit from more extensive practice with writing by imitation. However, based on insights attained in the course of writing the thesis and research I have read about the needs and abilities of inexperienced writers, I am not at present willing to make that recommendation. It is perhaps true that inexperienced writers could profit from extensive use of imitation exercises and process modeling of imitation/ emulation; but until more research is synthesized and applied, I suggest a conservative approach in using imitation with inexperienced writers.

It was while thinking about the use of imitation for students with limited writing experience, that a possible objection to writing by imitation even for experienced student writers formed in my mind: perhaps the imitation processes, as I have defined them in Creative Imitation, are more complicated than other writing pedagogy not using imitation. I designed Creative Imitation in order to provide students with a base, an adaptable structure, thereby rendering writing less frustrating for them. As stated by Collins and Gentner (and echoed by Flower and Hayes in the same collection):

Much of the difficulty of writing stems from the large number of constraints that must be satisfied at the same time. In expressing an idea the writer must consider at least four structural levels: overall text structure, paragraph structure, sentence structure (syntax), and word structure (spelling)...the attempt to coordinate all these requirements is a staggering job. What makes the learning process particularly difficult, however, is that the whole set of task components must be learned at once. (67)

Creative Imitation was designed to enable students to imitate the structure of a model text thereby freeing them of some of the simultaneous constraints of writing.

In Creative Imitation the student can interact with another person, represented by the writing model and the teacher process modeling, who has done what they are attempting to do. If the models are matched to their developmental strengths and their interests, students generally feel supported and guided in their efforts to express their ideas in writing.

However, when I think through what I am asking the students to do: create their version (imitation) of the model text while imitating the teacher modeling the process of imitating the model text--Creative Imitation may be more complicated than I generally perceived. Instead of decreasing the number of constraints a student has to juggle at one time, perhaps it gives her more to handle at once (and requires higher-order cognitive operations such as abstracting and transferring).

What I am asking students to do is imitate someone imitating someone else. Imitate the behavior of someone modeling the operations of a writing process by imitating a model text. There is the danger that this process becomes too removed from the actual creative act of writing. Three factors may balance out this objection. First, Creative Imitation is not designed to be the principal pedagogical strategy; it is one option providing an alternative approach to writing instruction. Second, so many teachers have

reported improvement of student writing and student attitudes about writing through the use of imitation and process modeling, that experimentation with these methods is indicated in order to resolve potential drawbacks, such as the one I am outlining. Finally this union of textual imitation with process modeling combines the focus on product and on process to provide the student with a gestalt experience similar to what Ann Berthoff describes as allatonceness (Enos, Sourcebook 547).

Remaining aware of limitations and possible side effects, writing by imitation can be used on a limited basis, as an optional strategy, with regular composition students. It is another way they can interact with language and authors. It is another way to unite reading and writing in the English curriculum. It is another way to think through writing. As with any other tool, the teacher should guide students through imitation exercises as they are ready and receptive to learn from imitation.

The role of the teacher in Creative Imitation, in addition to modeling the operations of composing by imitation, is to facilitate the connection between the student and the writing model. The teacher demonstrates the imitation process by establishing an identity with the author of the prose passage selected as the writing model. Designing and assigning imitation exercises, like all other

effective instruction, constitutes an art to be created and experimented with over time. The appropriate model for one student may be an impediment for another. Creative Imitation may not help some students. This process is a suggestion; I encourage teachers to modify as needed.

Designing and assigning imitation exercises, like all effective instruction, constitutes an art to be created and experimented with over time. Writing by imitation will be more effective if a model is not held up as a prescription: do this--but rather as a description: look what can be done in writing by experienced writers, who through much planning, drafting, revision, and editing--just what we are teaching you--achieve what we call "good" writing. We want to see if our understanding of how and what a given writer achieves in her writing can help us create something qualitatively similar. The term "qualitatively similar" is a guide, not a standard.

With the writing model providing the structure for the writing student to base himself on, he is encouraged to discover the subject he wants to write about that would work effectively when presented in the structure provided by the model. It is at this point the student can draw on personal experience, long-term memory, and personal preferences. Peer collaboration would fit into the process at this point too. Brain-storming, prewriting, free writing, role

playing, journal writing should all be part of writing by imitation.

Recommendations for Further Research

Few empirical studies have researched the connections between writing and imitation/emulation. The only three contemporary studies I found were all dissertation projects. William Martin tested the effects of twenty models-imitation lessons on the syntactic maturity and subjective rating of seventh grade writing students. Kathryn Simmons compared improvement in the overall writing quality and syntactic fluency of high school seniors receiving instruction in three different modes: literature without writing, form centered instruction with focused free writing, and stylistic imitation. Finally, James Shimabukuro investigated the imitation of form and of subject matter in the planning stage of freshman composition students.

All three researchers found limited or no improvement for the students using imitation techniques. Although there was gain for some of the students, it may have been teacher effect or another moderator variable. The difficulties encountered by these three projects point up the need for further empirical studies connecting imitation and writing. One purpose of my thesis has been, through the exploration

of issues and theories related to Creative Imitation, to help define the constructs of writing by imitation. What are the parameters of internal and external validity we must understand in order to design experiments to test the effectiveness of imitation/emulation in the teaching of composition? None of the studies cited proved the superiority of imitation over other instructional methods. However, to test the value of imitation, researchers are using imitation extensively instead of use as an occasional alternative in addition to the standard curriculum. In addition, in the above studies, imitation was not being introduced in conjunction with process modeling, a necessary condition for successful writing by imitation.

When I began this project, one of my goals was to map a geography of the mind as a student writes by imitation. What are the cognitive processes developed in writing by imitation? Although considerable experimental work has been done by Hayes and Flower on writing and protocol analysis, nothing similar has been done on writing and imitation. It is probable that conscious writing by imitation involves most of the cognitive processes we generally observe in writing behavior: reading, recognizing resemblances, developing strategies, forming analogies, and revising, among others. Empirical research would enhance our understanding of what goes on in the mind during imitation.

Continuing empirical and theoretical research would help determine how writing by imitation could be taught most effectively. However, in my opinion, the most important research, currently, would be to obtain a clear concept of how transference occurs in reading/writing/thinking processes, and this would directly relate to the benefits and limitations of writing by imitation.

Afterthoughts

I began this thesis wondering why a method used to help me learn to write, and which had been beneficial in enabling me to project my personal voice into writing, had been "thrown out the door." Imitation had become almost a "dirty word" in composition theory. Some teachers have continued using and advocating imitation, but in the eyes of many writing teachers, it was an abuse--an undesirable focus on the finished product, instead of a focus on writing as process. This viewpoint troubled me.

As I researched writing by imitation, I encountered teachers who had stories to share about their students' success and growth as writers, through the use of imitation exercises. They argued that writing by imitation could be an effective, even creative, strategy for the teaching/learning of writing.

The apologists for imitation have grown in number during recent decades. Before undertaking this thesis I had found imitation methods to be helpful--when used occasionally to increase awareness and understanding of style, voice, and tone--for my own writing and for the teaching of writing. After completing the research and the writing of this thesis, I continue to believe that writing by imitation can be a useful heuristic for student writing--however, I am a more cautious proponent of the use of imitation in the composition classroom. Cautious, in the sense of not advocating too strongly any one methodology or strategy at the expense of the many valuable ones available. Cautious, in the sense of focusing on the needs and abilities of individual students and not assuming that any method will help all students across the board.

I continue to strongly recommend the occasional use of close stylistic imitation exercises for composition students--with the understanding that writing by imitation always be introduced by process modeling. The potential benefits are many; however, we should be aware of actual and potential limitations and side-effects of any methods we use. I encourage more theoretical and empirical investigation into the uses of imitation and emulation for the teaching of writing. Only then will we know the full extent of the benefits or limitations and be able to transcend the

dichotomy of imitation/genuine, or--as Maxine Hairston points out--our prejudices that are built into the language. My hope is that I have, at least, convinced teachers that creative imitation is not an oxymoron--that creativity and imitation are not two mutually exclusive concepts. Creativity can be imitated, and imitation can be creative.

APPENDIX A

CLOSE STYLISTIC IMITATION

This example of a student imitation is from the Ebbitt textbook. The model paragraph is from Chapter 2 of Walden by Henry David Thoreau.

I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived. I did not wish to live what was not live, living is so dear; nor did I wish to practice resignation, unless it was quite necessary. I wanted to live deep and suck out all the marrow of life, to live so sturdily and Spartan-like as to put to rout all that was not life, to cut a broad swath and shave close, to drive life into a corner, and reduce it to its lowest terms, and if it proved to be mean, why then to get the whole and genuine meanness of it, and publish its meanness to the world; or if it were sublime, to know it by experience, and be able to give a true account of it in my next excursion.

Imitation done by college student:

Why I Took this Course.

I took this course because I wished to write deliberately, to use only essential words and phrases, and see if I could not learn to express myself better, and not, when I came to graduate, discover that I could not write well. I did not want to fail the course, my grade point average is so dear; nor did I wish to drop the course unless it was quite necessary. I longed to write brilliantly and turn out the best possible essays, to write so perfectly as to put an end to all of the corrections on my papers, to cut out unnecessary words and produce clear prose, to try to bring any writing ability I possessed into the open, and expose it to criticism, and if I proved to be a poor writer, why then at least I would have tried, and I would have no misconceptions about my skills, and if my writing were satisfactory, to gain confidence through my course experience, and be able to give an even better account of myself in my next English class.

This student imitation was done in Dr. Dhira Mahoney's course on the essay in English. The paragraphs to be imitated were selected by the students from the readings.

Lewis Thomas On Natural Death

There are so many new books about dying that there are now special shelves set aside for them in book shops, along with the health-diet and home-repair paperbacks and the sex manuals. Some of them are so packed with detailed information and step-by-step instructions for performing the function that you'd think this was a new sort of skill which all of us are now required to learn. The strongest impression the casual reader gets, leafing through, is that proper dying has become an extraordinary, even an exotic experience, something only the specially trained get to do.

Student imitation of Lewis Thomas paragraph:

There are so many new theories about parenting that there are now special classes given in community colleges, along with automotive maintenance and gourmet cooking and how to improve your business image. Some of the classes feature step-by-step methods of the ritual of toilet training and the intricate details of reading the bedtime story, such that you wonder how anyone raised kids up until now. The first-time parent gets the impression, from the media, that the proper method of childrearing is a learned, even a professional experience, something that requires a certification in parenting.

APPENDIX B
SUGGESTED TAXONOMY OF IMITATION METHODS

Copying

Dictee

Oral recitation

Translation

Controlled Composition--fill in the blank, change a few
words

Sentence imitation

Paragraph imitation

Close imitation of a passage--structure, style
traditionally contents imitation was also done but
currently not common

Precise

Paraphrase

Summary--written or oral retelling (recounting)

Parody

Satire

Loose imitation
"in the style of"
inspired by

APPENDIX C

Please check the following information as it applies to you: I teach English 101 9 102 12.

I am a G.A.T. 17 T.A. _____.

What program are/were you in? Ph.D. Literature: 7
Ph.D. English ED: 4
MFA (1 also Ph.D.Lit): 3
M.A. ESL: 1

How many years have you been teaching composition? ____.
From 1 to 20 years, average 5 years, median three years.

1. Do you use imitation as a teaching tool with your students? 10No 5Yes If yes, would you characterize the imitation exercises and assignments as: (If no, please move to next question.)

4 close imitation---students are instructed to use some actual words, phrases, literary devices, or conventions from an essay or a passage of writing?

4 in the style of---loosely based on the text, but not a sentence by sentence imitation?

3 instructors used both "close" and "in the style of"

1 instructor used "in the style of"

1 instructor used "close"

2. Do you have other composition teaching experience in which you have used imitation exercises? 8No 7Yes
Would these exercises be characterized as:

2 copying? 2 Yes

4 sentence imitation? 4 Yes

2 paragraph imitation? 2 Yes

7 stylistic imitation of a passage? 6 Yes

3. Have you ever modeled the steps of imitating a writing model to your class? 9No 5Yes If yes, would you briefly describe the steps you modeled for imitation?

4. Have you ever been in a writing course in which you were assigned imitation exercises? Would you briefly describe the course? What type of imitation was assigned or demonstrated?

9 answered No, they had never been assigned imitation exercises (one answered No, Thank God/god)

4 answered yes. Three had imitated one time in one course. One had done more imitation in prose style, but commented, "I didn't find it a very useful way to learn how to write.

5. What do you see as the benefits or limitations of imitation exercises and assignments?

Answers

Benefits:

Reading Writing Connection enhanced.
 If reading is internalized, leads to better writing.
 Playing with meaning and structure.
 Helps retention of structure and content.
 More sensibility (sic) in reading and writing.
 Helps with grammar patterns.
 Beneficial in helping students arrive at their own style and to become aware of "style."
 Good to use 1 on 1 in conferences for students who are stuck. Models how to convey a particular idea.
 Allows close look at good style.
 Interesting and useful way to teach syntactic patterns.
 Expand Style
 Pick up correct grammatical or syntactical habits.

Limitations:

Copying provides no gains.
 Formalizing imitation into exercises frustrates students; they imitate unconsciously from reading.
 Could be boring.
 Prevents development of one's own voice and style.
 Makes writing seem a matter of good imitation rather than reaching into oneself for a way to speak.
 Most of the students I've met are quite happy to copy/imitate rather than develop their own pattern....For college students, it seems a crutch (but permanent) rather than an aid.
 It puts form before content; or at least seems to assign primacy to form. The way I see it, the logical/hierarchical arrangement of form is always subservient to meaning.
 Students not yet mature enough in their own style to appreciate or recognize more sophisticated styles.

[My definition of imitation for the following statements is: A teaching technique through which students are instructed to pattern their writing on a writing model]

Would you please rate the following statements. Do you agree strongly (AS), agree (A), disagree (D), or disagree strongly (DS)?

1. Imitation can be an effective tool to teach students to become better writers in composition courses.	AS	A	D	DS
	6	2	2	1
2. College students generally understand what is expected of them when an imitation exercise is assigned.	AS	A	D	DS
	0	7	4	0
3. Imitation is an archaic teaching method. It stifles creativity and fails to help students to become better writers.	AS	A	D	DS
	1	3	6	2
4. Grammar and sentence structure cannot be effectively taught through imitation exercises.	AS	A	D	DS
	1	2	6	1
5. The process of imitation, if effectively modeled and encouraged by the teacher, can be an effective tool for teaching writing processes.	AS	A	D	DS
	3	6	1	1
6. Rhetorical skills and awareness can be learned through imitation exercises.	AS	A	D	DS
	3	4	4	1
7. Imitation is a vestige of the "product paradigm" and has limited value for teaching the processes of writing.	AS	A	D	DS
	1	2	5	0
8. Students often have little understanding of how to imitate a text.	AS	A	D	DS
	1	6	2	0

Three instructor did not answer any questions on this page. Several omitted one or more questions.

Use the space below to comment on or clarify any of the above questions (please indicate the number of the question):

COMMENTS:

I have little familiarity with imitation.

Can use imitation as free play with language.

Try on different patterns.

I know nothing, no opinion.

#6. The ability to extend form into meaning cannot be assimilated solely by imitation of that (those) form(s).

TEXTBOOK ANALYSIS

TEXT (titles in next section)	MODELS?	IMITATION PRESENTED?	IMITATION PROCESS?	MODELING?	COMMENT
Axelrod	E	N	N	N	Concept of reading/imitation/ transference to new writing, implicit in extensive presentation of models.
Baker	E	N	N	N	Not made explicit how students are to use models. How students transfer what they "see" in samples to what they do in their writing.
Calderonello L		N	N	N	States that writing and revising are best learned as students look over the shoulders of successful writers as these writers think, plan, and move toward a final draft. Excellent process modeling but not for imitation.
Ebbitt	M	L	N	N	Sees analyzing and imitating writing patterns (models) as a way for students to expand their writing options.
Flower	L	N	N	N	Protocols that demonstrate the writing process function as models, but not related to imitation. Many examples presented. Seems to assume that study and analysis of models will transfer skills and strategies to student writing.

TEXTBOOK ANALYSIS--Continued

Gere	M	M	L	E	Diagram of how to model a passage. Gere delivered a paper at the Mar 87 CCC Convention on "What is Imitation and Why are we Afraid of It?"
Hairston	L	N	N	N	Imitation is mentioned in brief reference to use of writing models.
Kinneavy	E	L	L	N	If there were ever a textbook based on writing by imitation, this is it. Yet, I could not find the word imitation mentioned even once. Nor was how to imitate or emulate ever made explicit. Professional examples, patterning writing on models emphasized.
Stewart	L	N	N	N	Perhaps, because the accent is on "authenticity" in writing, Stewart didn't think the principles of imitation were applicable. From his extensive studies in classical rhetoric, he would be familiar with the "imitatio" tradition.

E=extensive use M=moderate L=limited N=no use

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