An Ambidextrous Model of Assessment for the Second Language Writing Classroom

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About me

Program manager

Entrepreneur

Teacher educator

Teacher

Author, presenter and researcher in the fields of second language writing and assessment

What is your teaching context?

Are you a teacher or an administrator? Or both?

What are the main goals of students learning English for academic purposes?

The ambidextrous leader

Ability to compete in both mature businesses and new domains and to know which resources to use in each case.

Charles A. O'Reilly III
Michael L. Tushman

LEAD
—and—
DISRUPT

How to solve the
innovator's dilemma
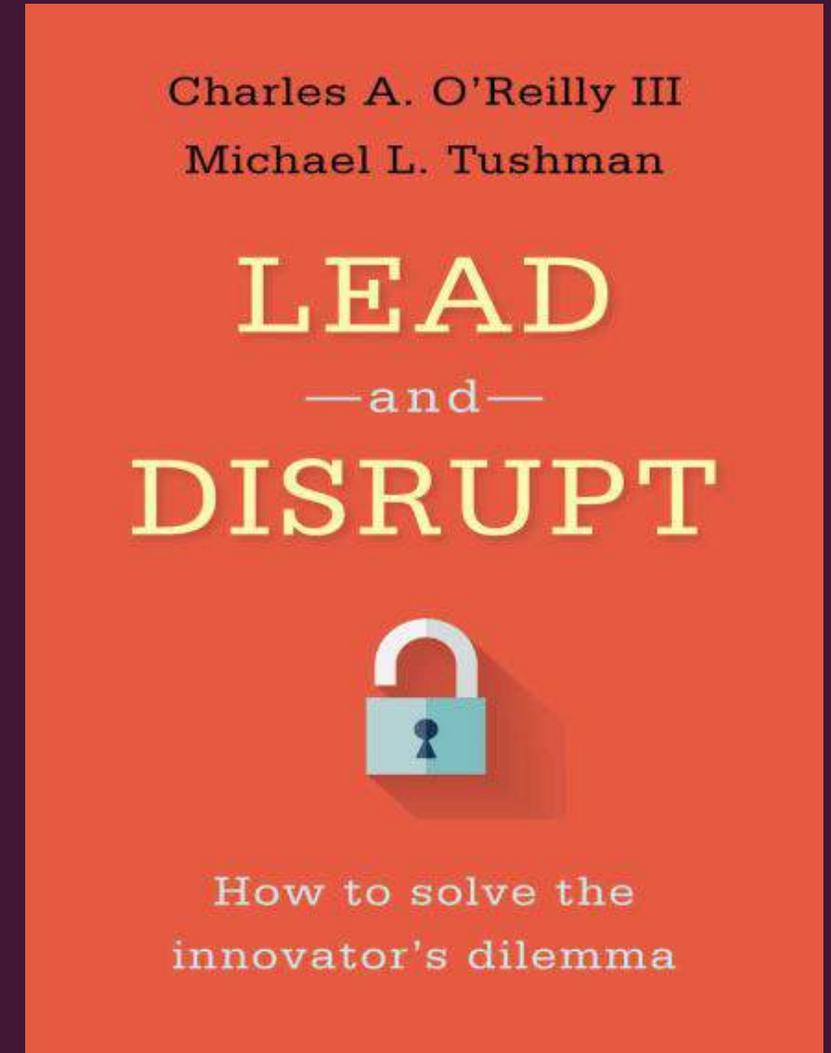
The ambidextrous teacher

Ability to incorporate both traditional and innovative approaches to teaching and assessment according to the context and to the students' needs.

TEACHING PHILOSOPHIES AND APPROACHES TO TEACHING WRITING

Prominent educational philosophies in language teaching

Classical humanism
Progressivism
Reconstructionism (White, 1988)

Post-Modernism or eclecticism (Cheng and Fox, 2017)

Approaches to teaching writing

Product

Process

Genre

Product Approach

"Controlled Composition" or "Current-traditional Approach"

Writing seen as a linear process

Students write → Teacher corrects and grades

Process Approach

Writing is seen as a recursive process

Group work is emphasized

Students should be allowed to choose topics

The teacher is a facilitator who provides feedback to students

The social dimension of writing is emphasized

Genre Approach
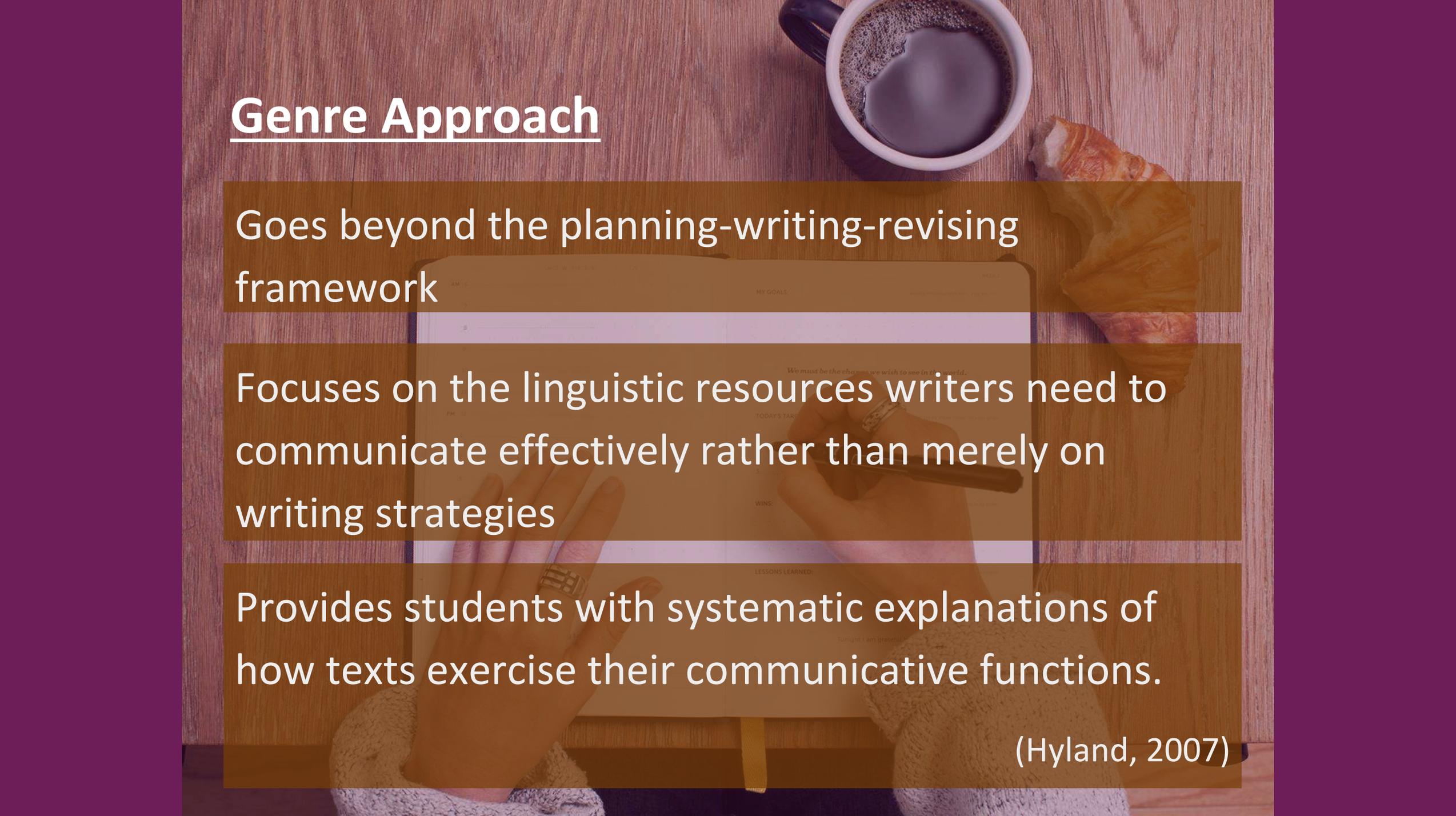
Goes beyond the planning-writing-revising framework

Focuses on the linguistic resources writers need to communicate effectively rather than merely on writing strategies

Provides students with systematic explanations of how texts exercise their communicative functions.

(Hyland, 2007)

Post-process framework

Balance between process and product   (Reid, 2001)

Classroom community and participation of students in the construction of their writing and that of others   (Reid, 2001)

Genre-based approaches as a complement to process writing   (Hyland, 2003)

Post-process era: recognition of the multiplicity of L2 writing theories and pedagogies   (Matsuda, 2003)

Writing involves the mediation between the writer and the reader.

Audience and discourse community determine knowledge.

APPROACHES TO ASSESSMENT

Assessment

Traditional Assessment		Alternative Assessment
Summative Assessment		Formative Assessment
Assessment of learning	Assessment for learning	Assessment as learning

Traditional tests	**Performance assessment**	**Performance assessments**	**No grades**
Timed composition tests	Compositon tests + compositions done at home	Process writing – assessment of the process and the product	Feedback
Indirect writing test		Standards-based assessment	Self and peer
		Portfolios	feedback

GRADES: THE ILLUSION OF OBJECTIVITY
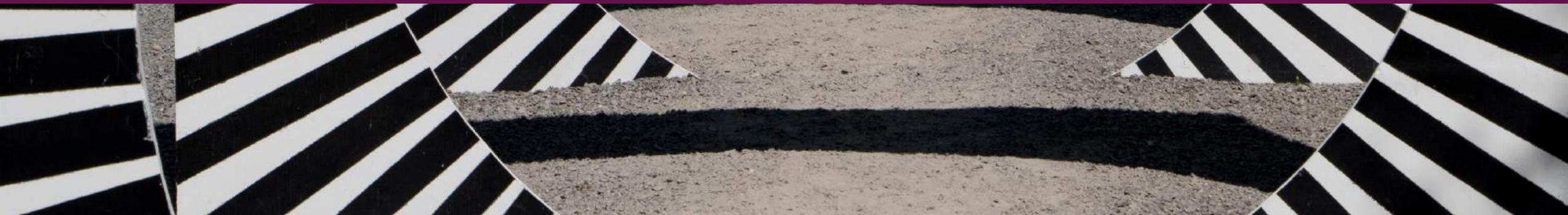
Assessment Reform

Standards-based assessment

Separation of cognitive and non-cognitive factors

Retakes

No-zero policy

Avoid grading early

What are the main goals of students learning English for academic purposes? Only to pass an exam? Only to get good grades in college?

What kind of citizens do we want for the future?

The teacher's dilemma

Prepare students for standardized exams

Prepare students for very traditional, grade-oriented academic contexts.

Adopt contemporary teaching and assessment practices to stimulate collaboration over competition.

The ambidextrous teacher will embrace both:

- Help students survive competitive environments.

- Foster collaboration, compassion, social awareness, etc.

HOW?

By way of assessment practices. The way a teacher assesses students shapes everything that goes on in the classroom. Assessment is not a consequence. It is the cause.

- Use a process-genre approach to teaching: multiple drafts, self-assessment, peer revision.

- Provide standards-based feedback using rubrics, and if possible, with no points attached.

- Assign in-class, exam-like timed writings for practice, but do not grade them. Focus on qualitative feedback.

- If a grade is needed, adopt portfolio assessment — grade only at the end.

Portfolio assessment:

- Choice
- Criteria for selection
- Criteria for judging merit
- Evidence of self-reflection

(Paulson, Paulson and Meyer, 1991)

Assessment in the Language Classroom

Liying Cheng & Janna Fox

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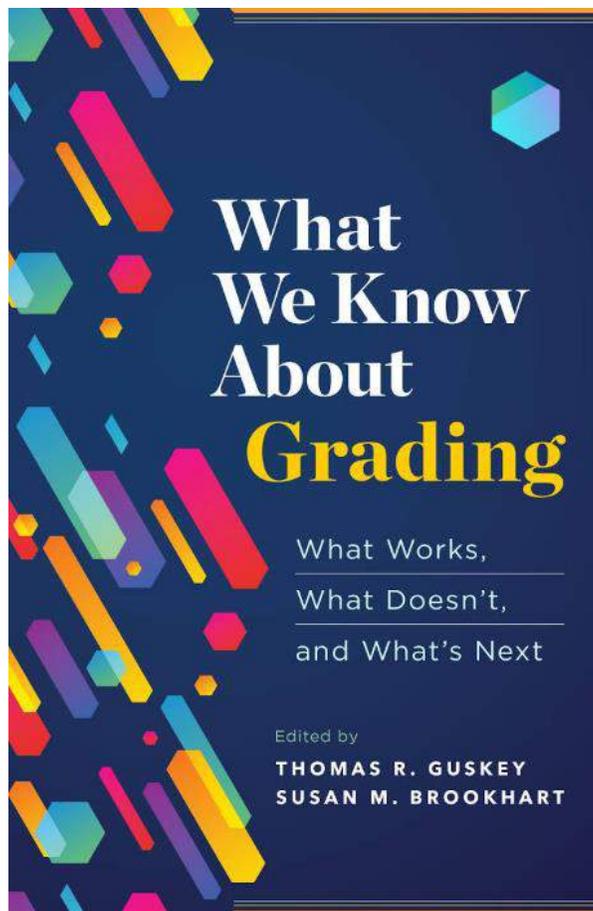
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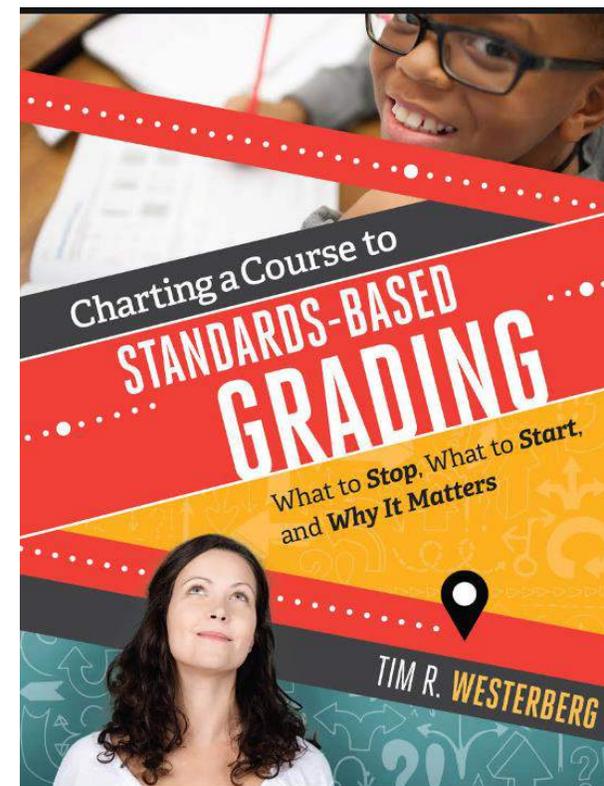
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