Motivation and the revision strategies of the adult learner in composition

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Motivation and the revision strategies
of the adult learner in composition

by

Linda Ann Dethloff

A Thesis Submitted to the
Graduate Faculty in Partial Fulfillment of the
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Signatures have been redacted for privacy

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Adult learners: most of us, as composition teachers, know them. They are the ones who are returning to school, often as a result of a life-changing event, but who are doubtful about coping with the changes that further education brings into their lives. They are the ones who take their education seriously, yet who often lack the confidence needed to become believers in their destinies. They are the ones who enter our composition classes with a wealth of resources and experiences, but who are characteristically unsure of their ability to say anything worthwhile in writing.

In short, returning adult students comprise a growing population on college campuses, particularly on community college campuses, and for that reason, a study of who they are, what their needs are in the composition classroom, and how we as composition teachers can best meet their special needs seems appropriate.

This paper has three focal points:

1) the role of motivation in adult students' resumption of their formal education;
2) the relationship between motivational factors and the performance of adult students in the composition classroom;

3) the revision strategies that adult students use in their composing processes.

In Chapter II, I discuss certain factors which differentiate adult students from traditional students. These factors include age, educational history, personal factors, goals and desires, and achievement factors. In addition, I discuss some pedagogical implications, including flexibility of class structure and techniques for helping adult students make the transition to college life more easily. Such teaching practices can help to meet the special needs of adult students and can benefit composition teachers as well.

In Chapter III, I first examine the life-changing factors and the ways adults view learning that motivate them to resume their education. Second, I analyze the role of attitude as it applies to motivation in composition. Finally, I discuss pedagogical implications for composition teachers in the areas of assignment design, in-class teaching methods, and general teaching strategies with adult students in mind. In addition, with reference to teaching practices, I also discuss the special constraints—particularly anxiety—that may affect
adult learners' motivation to write, and I explore some alternatives to regular classroom instruction that can benefit adult learners.

In Chapter IV, I define the terms of revision, editing, and proofreading. Next I explore traditional students' motivation to write and to revise, especially as these factors are affected by inspiration, skill level, understanding of reasons for revising, and situational variables. Then I explore adult students' motivation to write and to revise in terms of their preconceived notions regarding revision, the attention they give to revision, and the kinds of text changes that they make. Finally, I discuss pedagogical implications for composition teachers with regard to peer editing in the revision process of adult students.

In Chapter V, I summarize my findings and propose some directions for further research on returning adult students in the composition classroom.
CHAPTER II: ADULT LEARNERS

Prior to discussing the pedagogical implications for teaching adult learners in the context of composition courses, we must first differentiate adult students from traditional college students. We must also examine the pedagogical benefits that adult learners bring to the composition classroom, as well as the special pedagogical needs that they have.

Differentiation

Defining adult learners and differentiating them from traditional college students can best be done by looking at information under the following categories:

- age and educational history
- relevant personal factors
- goals and desires
- achievement factors
Age and educational history

For the purposes of this study, "adult learners" will include persons over 24 years of age who have been away from formal education for at least three years prior to their enrollment or re-enrollment in college. "Traditional students" will include persons 18 to 24 years of age who have continued their formal education from secondary school to college without significant interruption, i.e., within three years of high school.

Relevant personal factors

There are a few personal factors that tend to characterize adults who have returned to college. For one thing, adult learners are apt to study more and to be generally more satisfied with their classes and their instructors than are traditional college students (Cross, 71). Returning adults also appear to take more pride in being college students than do their younger counterparts, and they are more concerned about their image in class as well as their grades (Pomerenke and Mink, 206). Finally, adult learners feel more confident about their ability to maintain the strict study schedule demanded by college level work (Cross, 74).

However, while adult learners perceive themselves as hard workers, they often lack self-esteem. This lack of confidence may reflect past negative experiences in school, or their fear that as
they age they may not be able to compete academically (Courage, 5). In addition, some adults fear a sense of isolation in their classes (Troyka, 260). And while returning adult students rate themselves particularly high on traits such as independence, persistence, self-motivation, and drive (Cross, 73), they can be intimidated by "seeing a person younger than they in the authoritarian position of professor" (Pomereneke and Mink, 207). Thus, while adults appear to have positive attitudes concerning their re-entry into college, their lack of confidence often creates added stress.

Goals and desires

Whereas many traditional students enter college because of family expectations and with little regard for the seriousness of the commitment, adult learners pursue higher education primarily because they want to learn, and they re-enter the classroom prepared for hard work and sacrifice (Courage, 5). Indeed, the decision to return to school often comes at a time of life when men and women reappraise earlier decisions such as entering the work force after high school instead of attending college. This results in "deepened commitments and more self-directed goals" for adult learners (Sheehy, 222).

In addition, adult learners tend to favor single-concept, single-theory courses that focus on applying concepts to practical
problems. Returning adults, unlike traditional students, have a strong desire to know how their learning will promote their careers, help their communities, or improve their personal relationships (Courage, 4). In other words, returning adults appear to be more certain about what benefits they expect to gain from their education.

Achievement factors

Adult learners differ from traditional students in that the adults are apt to understand their course work more thoroughly (Cross, 71). They generally made lower grades in high school and are less likely to have followed college preparatory programs in high school. However, in college adult learners generally surpass traditional students in academic achievement, and do so largely because of the greater commitment to learning, more self-directed goals, and concern with immediate use of their newly gained knowledge mentioned above (See Von der Embse and Childs, 477-78; Krienko, 95).

Studies show, moreover, that married women above the age of 25 are more likely than single women 18 to 24 years of age to be high achievers (Von der Embse and Childs, 478). The high achievement indicative of adult married women reflects their belief that women are not necessarily restricted only to maintaining a house and raising a family, but that they can meet
the challenge of a dual role. Thus, these women seek the opportunities that formal education presents and meet the challenge by becoming high achievers.

Composite picture

From the information above, we can draw a composite picture of a typical adult student. Besides the fact that adult learners are older than traditional students, they also tend to look upon their education much more seriously. Specifically, they understand their coursework more thoroughly, they show greater concern about their image and their grades in class, and they take more pride in being college students. However, adult learners tend to lack self-esteem and self-confidence, and they may be ill at ease in the presence of an instructor who is younger than they. In addition, adult learners want to learn and expect to apply what they learn to their jobs, their careers, or their personal relationships. Perhaps most importantly, in spite of their lower academic achievement in high school, adult learners tend to outperform traditional students in the classroom.

Pedagogical Implications

The above characteristics of adult learners means that having such students can provide distinct advantages in the composition classroom. However, composition instructors also must be aware of
Benefits to the composition classroom

Adult students bring several benefits to the composition classroom because of their desire to share information, their varied ages and backgrounds, and their willingness to help each other.

Sharing of knowledge:

The composition classroom benefits from the presence of adult learners because of their willingness to participate and share ideas (Pomerenke and Mink, 208), and their wealth of real-world experience (Troyka, 256). Consequently, teachers find that discussions are more "lively and that younger students learn by hearing attitudes expressed by an older person who is a fellow student and not a parent or teacher" (Pomerenke and Mink, 208). For example, younger students might benefit from a discussion by adults of what the "real world" expects and demands in the work place.

Diversity of ages and backgrounds:

Also, class discussions and group exchanges are more beneficial because of the diversity of ages and backgrounds
present. In fact, adult learners may be a more qualified audience for student writing than the instructor because of their specialized knowledge in certain occupational fields or in leisure activities (Pomereneke and Mink, 208). Furthermore, adult students possess resources not usually used or even recognized in colleges (Troyka, 256). For instance, an adult learner who served in the armed forces has a reservoir of knowledge about the military; likewise, an adult who has lived in another geographical area may have knowledge of cultural differences. In other words, adult students possess a vast number of rich and varied experiences from which to draw upon whether in writing or discussion in the composition classroom.

Willingness to help each other:

In my own experience teaching adult learners in a community college, I found them extremely willing to help each other by exchanging and suggesting ideas for paper topics. For example, when my students (all of whom were enrolled in the college's health care administration program) brainstormed for ideas in writing a persuasive paper, they came up with topics ranging from the use of living wills, to the inadequate salaries for nursing assistants, to the practice of euthanasia. Students handed in a brief statement of purpose concerning the topics that had chosen, and after I returned their statements they worked together to help
each other generate arguments, "other side" arguments, and rebuttals.

Similarly, in discussing audience analysis, another group of adult learners (who happened to be enrolled in the college's drug and alcohol abuse awareness program) realized the importance of including definitions and examples for specific alcohol and drug-related terms in their self-expressive papers. Not only did they question how much the reader might know about alcohol and drug abuse, but they also realized that personal examples from their own histories might help the reader to understand those problems from their own perspectives. Such attention to audience awareness also enabled the students to learn about the concept of writers "distancing" or separating themselves from what they write.

Special needs in composition

Just as certain advantages result from the characteristics of adult learners, there are also special needs that arise that the college composition instructor must be aware of. These needs have to do with the flexibility of class structure in the composition classroom (Pomerenke and Mink, 209) and with techniques for easing the transition to college life (Troyka, 257).
Flexibility in class structure:

Many adult learners have job and family responsibilities, and these constraints tend to aggravate their anxiety levels (Kuh and Ardiolo, 330). Part of this anxiety may result from their mixed feelings about learning and from fear of the changes that learning will bring (Troyka, 260). For example, some adults may fear a change in careers, in jobs, or in job location that additional education might entail. Thus, classroom practices need to be structured to help adult learners cope with personal responsibilities and fear of change in their lives.

Much of this anxiety can be alleviated by flexibility in classroom activities and by assignment scheduling to encourage the learning and enjoyment of returning adult students (Pomerenke and Mink, 208). Also, teachers may have to be much more flexible in such areas as accepting late papers or excusing absences from class (Pomerenke and Mink, 207).

Because of their higher anxiety levels, adult students are likely to show a greater desire for direction, guidance, and limits on writing assignments than students of traditional college age (Connors, 266). For example, if a class is assigned to write a research paper, the adult students may ask several questions about sources for information, use of citations, the formatting of research papers, and how extensive the research should be. Also, because of their unfamiliarity with the research paper as a
writing genre, or their lack of recall about what steps to follow, adult learners may be overly concerned with producing a "correct" paper.

For those returning adults who expect composition instruction to give them the writing skills needed to perform duties on their jobs, composition instructors need to design flexible courses and assignments (Polanski, 216). Specifically, writing teachers need to interact with the adult students who come to their classes from the workplace, determine the needs of these students, and accommodate the course to match those needs. Thus the instructor might include some career-oriented assignments which resemble "real" world writing activities, as an alternate form of assignment (Slaninka, 16). Examples of these might include business memos, report writing, a variety of business letters, case study situations, or a set of instructions or procedures for performing a task.

Specifically, Troyka found that there are two concerns which composition teachers should consider in planning for composition classes that include adult students. One is that adult learners are more at ease in an oral rather than a written mode. For instance, adults are more confident and self-assured when discussing a selection orally than they are responding to the selection in writing. Second, adult learners are holistic thinkers who need to see the paragraph first, then the sentence,
then the word (260). For example, because adult students look
upon a reading in the text holistically, in which they focus on
the "whole" essay rather than on the "parts," they experience
difficulty in breaking up long passages of information and
analyzing the segments in order to solve problems. Therefore,
composition teachers might plan for oral discussions of reading
selections while written work might take the form of daily
prewriting activities connected with assignments or entries in
journals. In addition, composition teachers can help adults
analyze the parts of an essay by pointing out the elements of a
paragraph such as topic sentences, primary and secondary
supporting sentences, thesis statements, and transitions. This
same procedure can be applied to the sentence level, focusing on
basic sentence patterns. Finally, the composition teacher can
direct adult students to specific words within sentences, focusing
on the use of concrete versus abstract words and connotation
versus denotation.

Techniques for easing the transition to college life:

Fears, doubts, and other emotional and behavioral problems
create hardships for adults adjusting to the role of student
(Lance et al. 480). Therefore, background skills in grammar and
mechanics may need to be taught with adult learners in mind,
because they may be frustrated or embarrassed by their lack of
recall (or basic knowledge) in these areas. Consequently,
relatively simple and straightforward practice exercises, complete with sample problems, should be utilized. Also, attention should be given to repetition of such skills as needed. Development of grammatical and mechanical skills can be followed by the use of advanced skills such as sentence variety, use of transitions, and paragraph unity (Day, 3).

Yet, returning adult students also should be helped with what seems more difficult for them to do such as generating and organizing details. Susan Meyers found, in her study of 100 returning adult students in her composition class, that the difficulty in writing did not lie in mechanics and grammar but in development and organization of ideas. Therefore, though instructors should not ignore product and process in composition, development and organization of ideas should occupy a good part of the classroom instruction, if these are problematic areas within a given group of adult students. In addition, Mildred Day notes the importance of composition instructors providing clear examples or models of various types of prose essays. So that adult students see different ways of organizing ideas, each type should contain a different approach to organization. Ideally, instructors would begin with exaggerated examples first, followed by more subtle examples of organizational approaches. Composition instructors should also point out the similarities in prose essays. For example, the use of figurative language or parallel constructions might be noted in several different essays.
Some adult students fear giving the "wrong" answer or asking a "dumb" question and thus are reluctant to speak and ask questions in the composition class. These adults need to be encouraged to contribute to class discussions, even though they may be out of the habit of doing so. They also need to feel free to ask for special help in composition. Instructors should be prepared to offer information about the purpose and the benefits of the college writing center or tutorial services, which might be available through the English department.

Furthermore, adults need to be made aware of their extensive resources for generating writing. In their college writing courses, adults need the sense of authority that goes with being a writer; they need to detach themselves from experience and examine it by writing; and they need to share what they have discovered through writing (Graves, 4). "Writing is an act of discovery for both skilled and unskilled writers" (Hairston, 87). Adult students need to see themselves as writers who have histories from which to draw upon in their writing, not merely as students who happen to put words on paper. In short, the desire of adult writers to express in writing is continually present, simply because of their extensive reservoir of ideas for writing. George Rutledge sums up this need: "If you ask adult students if they would like to be better writers, most of them will probably affirm what is a universal human need--to be heard or read and understood" (9-10).
More specifically, composition teachers can help adult students achieve discovery of themselves as writers through the use of journals. Journals can serve as an outlet for expressive writing, invention, and discovery in writing (Rutledge, 18). They allow for freedom of expression without the constraints of correctness and may benefit adult students in future writing assignments.

But Troyka sees some adult students as needing also the acceptance and understanding of a composition teacher, in order to become better motivated:

These adult students are the ones who do not eradicate writing errors solely by doing grammar exercises in a workbook; they are the ones who did not 'get it' in high school; they are the ones who do not learn well from traditional lectures in the classroom; and they are the ones who are confused or even insulted when teachers are inaccessible, detached, or unfriendly (256).

For the composition teacher, these students require different methods of teaching within the composition classroom. Grammar exercises can be the basis of large group discussion on a weekly basis, for example. For those adults who need additional practice, the composition teacher can provide individual help during a workshop activity. Small groups, collaborative learning, and the use of workshop sessions can replace some of the
traditional lectures in class. In addition, composition teachers can help adults by removing their aura of authority and self-importance that sometimes tends to create divisions in the composition classroom.

Summary

By their very presence in the composition classroom, adult learners enhance class discussions as well as share ideas from their diverse backgrounds which benefit everyone in the class. But their presence also makes it necessary for composition teachers to consider flexibility in class structure by using teaching techniques to help adults adjust to college life.
CHAPTER III: MOTIVATION OF ADULT LEARNERS

Motivation to Learn and to Write

Compared to their younger counterparts, adult students are more motivated to learn and to write for a variety of reasons, not just as the next step following secondary education. One significant reason has to do with life-changing factors which motivate adults to return to school. A second reason has to do with adults' goal-oriented views toward learning, which suggests that adults are motivated to learn in order to reach specific goals, to participate in an educational activity, or to learn for the sake of learning.

Life-Changing Factors

A significant factor in the motivation of adult learners to resume their education is the presence of life-changing events. The high level of motivation exhibited by adult learners is often related to "triggering events such as a change of job, return to the work force, divorce, or death of a spouse" (Courage, 5). These are the ones whom Von der Embse and Childs characterize as wanting to know how to become a better worker, spouse, parent, or citizen (476).

As such life-changing events accumulate or intensify, stress upon the individual increases--but so does "the motivation to cope with change through engagement in a learning experience" (Zemke and Zemke,
So for many returning adults education is a way to cope with significant life changes. For example, economic changes in one sector of the economy, such as farming, may require that farmers return to school to learn new skills because they can no longer depend on farming as a means of employment. Furthermore, when returning adults are assured that the changes are a certainty, they tend to participate in any learning that will help them cope with the transition (Zemke and Zemke, 46). This means that adult learners enter the college classroom with a radically more pragmatic approach to learning than do traditional students.

**Orientation Toward Learning**

Adult learners are motivated to learn for a variety of reasons. In a 1968 study of motivation in adult learners, C.O. Houle identified three distinct groups:

- **goal-oriented learners**, who use learning to gain specific objectives, such as a change of career.

- **activity-oriented learners**, who participate primarily for the sake of the activity itself rather than to develop a skill or learn subject matter.

- **learning-oriented learners**, who choose to learn for its own sake (13).
Houle concluded that almost every adult has more than one reason for learning. In addition, he found that most adults appear to enjoy learning and that definite learning patterns do exist for them (13).

Motivation in Composition

Motivation signifies the willingness and self-determination with which adults approach their education. For composition instructors, the motivation of adult learners has a direct bearing on their writing and on their improvement as writers.

Role of attitude

The positive attitudes that adult students bring into the composition classroom often account for their high motivation. Compared to their younger counterparts, older students display a more positive attitude towards writing and a greater tolerance for remediation (Slaninka, 16). And as learners mature, they become more self-directed and gain much experience that becomes an additional resource for learning. Adult learners' desire to know becomes increasingly tied to their social rules so that they seek to apply the knowledge immediately rather than to postpone knowledge. Accordingly, adult students' orientation towards learning moves from one of subject centeredness to problem centeredness (Knowles, 38). Because adult learners know why they have made the choice to attend college, they want to take advantage
of the knowledge that their composition courses and their writing instructors provide (Pomerenke and Mink, 207).

In a study of adult learners in their community college composition classes, Pomerenke and Mink found the adults to be more highly motivated than traditional students. Similarly, in a study analyzing the variance of study habits and attitudes between older students and younger students, Slaninka determined that both groups had problems with writing skills but that adult students tended to see remediation of writing skills as a "logical, positive, and opportune solution to their study problems" (16), again attesting to the positive attitude of adults.

Another way in which adults' attitudes play a significant part in composition is that adults are more likely to question the relevance of their coursework in composition as it applies to a real-life working situation than do their younger counterparts (Pomerenke and Mink, 207). One way to accommodate this disparity is to center the course around a certain subject or concept that all the students in the class have some knowledge and experience with. Patricia Connors termed the sharing and writing about work and life experiences as adults "building awareness" of the subject matter available to them (198).

A way to incorporate useful learning experiences for adults in the composition classroom is apparent in the course design of Nicholas Coles and Susan Wall. They build their composition course for returning adult students around the subject of "work." The adult students write
narratives from their personal experiences in the "working" world. In addition, they keep journals in which they record their responses to a number of readings centered around the topic of "work." Coles and Wall want their adult students to bring something to their writing from their own world of work and thus experience living between two worlds—the one of academia and the one of work. By focusing on the worlds of work and academia, adult students tend to take a more positive view of the academic world than they might otherwise. In other words, through reading and writing, the design of this course enables adults students to bring to their academic work a commitment to learning something additional about "work" in their real world.

Coles and Wall also note that many returning adult students feel "powerless" and out of touch with the academic world when returning to academia after a short or lengthy absence (316). But a subject-centered course design such as this allows adult students to "mesh" their experiences in the working world with the experiences they are having in the academic world.

Role of anxiety

The anxiety that some adult students experience, however, tends to lessen their positive attitudes toward learning and writing, especially since there is strong evidence of association between general anxiety and writing anxiety (Thompson, 10). Individuals with greater writing apprehension tend to be less effective writers, while those with less
apprehension are better writers (McCarthy et al. 467). While better writers appear to be more self-directed and take charge of their own writing, some adult writers are influenced by external factors which hamper their writing efforts. In fact, adult students' perceptions of their writing ability have a direct bearing on the quality of their written products (McCarthy, 469).

Thus, as we have seen earlier, the positive attitudes that adults bring with them to the composition classroom often account for their high degree of motivation. Furthermore, their desire to immediately apply new information to a "real-life" workplace explains the willingness and determination with which adults approach composition. Yet, for some adults, the effects of anxiety can interfere with the positive attitudes that seem to be characteristic of the majority of adult students. To ease the anxiety of some adults and to reinforce the positive attitudes of most adults, then, are two objectives that can be attained through various teaching practices in the composition classroom.

Pedagogical Implications

Certain life-changing factors and the reasons why adults choose to resume their education do have a direct impact in the composition classroom. Research shows too that there are highly successful alternatives to helping adults learn, particularly when it comes to writing. And, because of the maturational factors that affect adult
learners, certain approaches can and should be employed to help adults learn. There are several strategies such as prewriting and freewriting that instructors might utilize when teaching adult students. In addition, composition teachers need to talk about their own writing experiences and to consider the amount of previous writing experience their adult students have had. Finally, the presence of a positive environment can make a difference in the kind of product that adult writers produce.

Conference Approach

Because of adult learners' high degree of motivation, the conference approach to composition is particularly effective with such students. This is because adults are much more conscientious about meeting appointment times, they are more apt to support their opinions while interacting with the instructor, and they tend to react more objectively to the comments on their papers (207). As a result, adult learners are able to get the individualized instruction many may need and desire to focus on individual strengths and weaknesses in their writing abilities.

The use of the conference approach in teaching writing also has the advantage of allowing students to choose their own topics (for writing) and to work with the instructor through a series of drafts. The conference approach means leading adult students "back to their resources, their sense of territory, information, and voice" (Graves,
In other words, in the conference approach composition instructors provide guidance to the adult writer through a series of questions which force the writer to talk about what he has composed.

**Process approach**

Besides the conference approach in teaching writing, composition instructors need to teach the writing process, and not just talk about it (Rutledge, 14). Adult students need to be told that each person has a composing process, and that making meaning is the work of the active mind and is thus within their natural capacity (14). In addition, since composing does not occur in a straight forward linear manner, adult students should understand that the composing process involves a kind of retrospective structuring—movement forward only occurs after one has some sense of where one wants to go (Rutledge, 14). In other words, if adult students have an understanding of what the composing process involves, they in turn have the potential of becoming better thinkers and better learners.

**Pre-writing/Freewriting**

How adults view writing and how this view affects their motivation has led to some conclusions about the value of pre-writing in the composition classroom. "Readiness" of the adults to respond to and absorb information is enhanced by an on-going free writing activity (Scheuermann, 72). By translating their thoughts and experiences into writing, these adult learners gain immediate involvement in the process
of writing. In her study of over 150 full-time policemen and part-time adult students, Mona Scheuermann found that the use of a daily in-class free writing period encourages students to write as part of an everyday routine and to write in an environment free of the constraints of their home environments. "It has often been said that, beyond the very basic level, we learn to write by writing. What is not so often emphasized is that the writing must be a natural function of our minds" (71). In other words, the motivation of adult writers is a natural outgrowth of their interest in whatever is immediately present in their minds—the trip to class or the day on the job.

Specifically, adult students should be given a period of time for free writing on a regular basis, since it helps writers find their own way of saying things (Rutledge, 18). Free writing instruction should include writing for different purposes and occasions in a variety of ways. Sharing this free writing with others is a way for adult students to initiate discussions or to offer opinions in the composition classroom.

Scheuermann found additional benefits of increased motivation and learning and less self-consciousness among returning adult students participating in free writing as an everyday activity. She noted that adult learners realize they have a wealth of ideas to put down on paper and that "writing is at that point not an alien activity imposed by the English teacher but is part of what the student does" (72). Despite ten minutes taken everyday from a fifty minute class period for free
writing, Scheuermann remains convinced that the gains the student makes in terms of practice in self-expression and preparation for learning during the rest of the class far outweigh the minimal loss in teaching time (73).

Adult learners' motivation to write is fueled by a need for self-expression and by a need to produce that writing during regular, quiet writing periods. "Once a student finds he has something to say and wants to say it, he wants also to have the means to do so" (75). By promoting the benefits of free writing and by responding to the difficulties students may have had in transferring ideas from brain to paper, the instructor can actively assure adult students of the value and practical application of their expression.

Teachers as writers

One of the best ways that composition teachers can motivate their adult students to write is to write themselves. A teacher who writes, and who is enthusiastic about encouraging returning adult students to write, is absolutely necessary to the success of a composition class (Slainika, 16-17). If composition instructors spend more time writing and observing how they and their adult students write, they will be in a better position to inspire self-confidence and willingness to write in their adult students. In addition, composition teachers should discuss their own strengths and weaknesses as writers. "Once instructors have experienced the problems all writers face--the difficulty of finding
subjects, trusting an audience, getting stuck, and all the other scary things that happen when you write—they will be prepared to teach writing with more sympathy and confidence than any single lesson plan or book of writing ideas could ever provide" (6). Most importantly, adult students must understand that in order to learn to write, one must write and be willing to take risks with an instructor and a group that they trust.

Previous writing experiences

Although most adult students have a certain degree of confidence, we have seen that some older students appear to be less confident about having something worthwhile to write about. For these adult learners, the constraints of diminished self-confidence and self-esteem can affect their motivation to write to the extent that they doubt that their life interests and experiences provide enough material to write about (Connors, 264). Conversely, like their younger counterparts, non-traditional students enjoy writing, they describe themselves as people who write well, they believe it is important to have at least one writing course in college, and they believe that the writing skills they acquire in college will prove useful to them in the future. Such factors indicate that, considering the increasing numbers of non-traditional students in the classroom and their attitudes toward writing, composition instructors need to consider the diversity of their
classes in terms of the students' previous writing experiences and the levels of difficulty they appear to have with writing.

As was indicated earlier, by maintaining flexibility in assignment design, composition teachers can do much to encourage the learning and enjoyment of all students, including the adult learners present in the class (Pomerenke and Mink, 208). Flexibility can be achieved by utilizing a variety of different types of prose essays to extending a deadline for a paper that is due to changing textbooks to those with a broader appeal or those designed specifically for adult learners. Also, flexibility can be achieved by changing teaching methods so that adult students both "hear" and "see" ideas presented in the course. Finally, flexibility can be achieved by changing course content, such as including some assignments that might be relevant to the working world.

Day sees adults as needing assignments based on synthesis and on analysis. In other words, assignments should focus on adults' skill in working with parts of the essay as well as the whole product, since as we have seen before, adults tend to view essays holistically. In reinforcing her adult students' organizational skills, she suggests the use of a syllabus which will not only fill an intellectual need of returning adult students but will also allow students to control their study time much better (4). In addition, she advocates the use of a sample research paper on the subject of doing a research paper so that the assignment is explained visually and verbally (5). This sample research paper helps adult students to develop their analytical skills
and at the same time to learn how to conduct library research, how to avoid plagiarism, and how to format a research paper.

Also, composition instructors might encourage adult students to conduct an on-going assessment of their written work and to note improvement. They might be encouraged to maintain a cumulative folder as a helpful tool in noting their progress as writers.

Positive environment

Composition instructors can help adult students become more competent writers and to feel better about themselves by providing a positive environment for their expressive and public writing experiences and opportunities. Some adult students may need to be encouraged to talk openly about their writing problems and fears before participating in a peer editing situation where others see their writing. Teachers should provide an environment in which adult students and the instructor interact freely in discussing writing.

Instructors need also to be patient with adult students' requests for directions and for detailed explanations of assignments while encouraging more autonomy (Connors, 199). In particular, writing teachers should recognize the vulnerabilities of many adult students (Hardaway, 8) and in turn, ease the authoritative attitudes in the classroom. For example, if adult students seem to be spending too much time or are becoming frustrated by spending many hours on assignments,
composition instructors should help to ease the frustration by suggesting to students appropriate amounts of time for various writing tasks.

Day maintains that "confidence" and "competence" should be the goals composition instructors aim for when teaching returning adult students. To illustrate, composition instructors can use black ink or pencil rather than red ink when correcting papers and they can explain that they are going to "edit" papers rather than "correct" them. Or, instructors can grade on improvement and on competence at the end of the course rather than assign low grades during the course of instruction (Day, 8). Adult students will also benefit from instructors returning their papers promptly and from individual conferences concerning such papers.

While "confidence" and "competence" are important self-esteem factors, the composition teacher also needs to consider the anxiety of some returning adults in connection with writing. One of the causes of anxiety may be due to a gap in the adult student's knowledge (Aldrich, 300). With the absence of a method for preparing to write and organizing the material, some adult writers tend to "flounder through their writing tasks, anxious, defensive, and reluctant" (300). As a result, they produce disorganized and ineffective documents which, in the long run, can adversely affect them.
But skill practice can relieve some of the anxiety adult learners experience in the composition classroom (Thompson, 10). For those adult students experiencing lingering problems with grammar and mechanics, composition instructors should reiterate the rules and patterns for grammar, sentence structure, and mechanics in terms of problem solving. Thompson found that by practicing various skill areas, adult learners' anxiety can be effectively lessened (11). In addition, Crabbe found that many adults experience some degree of anxiety when they must forego a prewriting period, in which they don't have time to think about the subject (7). Therefore, a definite period of time in class for prewriting should be set aside whenever an essay is assigned.

Adult learners experiencing anxiety need to be recognized for their vulnerabilities and insecurities (Hardaway, 9). Moreover, because of these factors, the adult students should be encouraged to make their contributions. By treating students as adults and by recognizing their special human needs, composition teachers can help to minimize the anxiety levels of adult learners.

Alternatives to regular classroom instruction

Because adults are highly motivated and usually in a hurry to reach their educational objectives, they can benefit from alternative ways of receiving college credit for freshman composition (Hardaway, 7). Experience has shown that the highly-motivated adult learners tend to be more successful
with alternative ways of attaining credits than do the normal, traditional students (8).

One such program, Time-Shared Interactive Computer Controlled Information Television, provides returning adults with a computer-assisted remedial reading or freshman composition program as a way to learn instead of a conventional classroom situation. By using the computer, these highly-motivated adults can complete their freshman composition requirements in less time than the normal fifteen week period (8). Hardaway cites another program as an additional alternative: returning adults may rent a composition course video prepared by the Dallas County Community College District. Viewing the lectures at home, students come to campus only to complete written assignments and to get help from the instructor.

Another approach to motivation and adult writing is the course design of "Learn and Shop Composition." James East and Ronald Strahl discovered minimal anxiety experienced by adult students taking composition in the "Learn and Shop Composition" classes, a basic writing program for returning adults and taught by faculty members at Indiana University. In fact, these students often wrote much more than the campus adult students (270).
East and Strahl, both of whom have taught in this program, claim that by offering these basic composition classes at the local shopping center, individuals are afforded the opportunity to have their writing skills evaluated without having to make the commitment to the university, to family, and to themselves. East and Strahl believe the motivation for students enrolling in the course is twofold: the class has the potential of opening up new interests while at the same time providing entertainment. If the students did well in the course, they might be willing to make the commitment to attain a college degree (269).

A course grade may be a motivating factor as well. According to East and Strahl, the instructors who have participated in the program rank the intelligence, motivation, and appropriate experience of the Learn and Shop student far above those of the average, on-campus student. These instructors noted that their Learn and Shop students tended to write longer essays, to participate more during class discussions, to ask more questions related to the writing process, and more often to turn in required papers on time than do the campus students (269). By contrast, the adult campus students are more interested in a business-like atmosphere within the classroom, are more restrained, and are less likely to offer comments and responses in class,
especially if they are not confident that their contributions and opinions are relevant (269). In summary, students in the Learn and Shop course appear to be more at ease and to be more receptive to connections made between writing in the class and writing in the "real" world (269).

Summary

As a group, returning adult students tend to be highly motivated to resume their education, either because of life-changing factors or because of their desire to reach specific educational goals. Their high level of motivation, in turn, has a direct effect upon their status as students in the composition classroom, for they appear to approach their education with much willingness and self-determination. We will now look at connections that can be made between their motivation as adult students and writers and their motivation during the revision process in composition.
CHAPTER IV: MOTIVATION AND REVISION

Because there are certain factors which motivate adult students to learn, some connections can be made between their willingness to resume their educations and the strategies they are likely to use in the revision process. Not only are there differences between the revising processes of non-traditional adult writers and traditional student writers, but adult writers also tend to devote more attention to the very process of revising. Furthermore, adult students look upon revising as a deliberate act which must be carried out to complete the composing process, while most traditional-age students fail to see a need for revising their writing.

In this chapter, I will examine first the terminology associated with the "revision" process. Next I will look at traditional students' desire to write and those factors which tend to label traditional students as "non-revisers." Then I will examine some of the pre-conceived notions that adult writers have about the revision process, the attention they give to revision, and the kinds of changes that adult students make. Finally, I will note the pedagogical implications for composition teachers regarding the revision process of adult students.
Terminology

To discuss "revision," certain terms need to be defined within the context of the composing process. Because some individuals tend to confuse the meaning of the terms "revision," "editing," and "proofreading," some distinctions must be made.

The word "revision" connotes several different ways of working with a given text in the process of writing. Generally, it means going back over what one has written for meaning and making necessary changes, of which error correction is only a part. Therefore revision refers to a process involving more extensive changes in meaning than editing or proofreading for errors. Indeed, recent studies indicate that the writing process is not linear and that writers make continual movement back and forth among planning, revising, and reformulating their ideas (Hairston, 87). Revision, then, is central to creating meaning.

In contrast, "editing" generally refers to the process of finding and correcting errors, usually at the sentence level, within a given text. Editing can be thought of as an intermediary step between the tasks of revising and proofreading. When students edit, they may change a word here and there or make other organizational changes in sentence
structure, or they may simply correct mechanical errors. They do not "re-see" the content, nor do they consciously read every word of the text for form and content.

"Proofreading" entails a slowed-down process of reading word for word, the writer being "interested in form and mechanical considerations" (King, 109). Mina P. Shaughnessy sees proofreading as "an indistinguishable aid to the mastery of grammar" (155). But it is important to note that proofreading requires that the proofreader see what is written exactly as it appears on the page or in the paper and not what he believes is there.

The primary focus of this chapter is the revision process of traditional and non-traditional students.

Motivation and Revision of Traditional Students

In this section, I will first examine the motivational factors in the writing process of traditional student writers. Next, I will analyze the role of motivational factors in the revision process of traditional student writers, explaining some differences between "non-revisers" and "revisers."
Motivation to write

For traditional students, the motivation to write originates from a genuine desire to write and a belief that they are capable of writing. Furthermore, self-evaluation and traditional students' belief in their ability to write can affect the overall quality of writing. In a collaborative study, research compiled by Patricia McCarthy, Scott Meier, and Regina Rinderer indicated a strong relationship between traditional college freshman writers' evaluations of their writing skills and the quality of their written work (465).

The researchers based their findings on a self-efficacy model designed by social learning theorist Albert Bandura. This model attempts to monitor and explain the changes which take place in behavior during the composing process. With reference to traditional students' motivation in composition, Bandura's theory suggests that such students may have some idea of what is expected of them and may be sure of the procedures to produce the desired piece of writing. But if the writers do not believe they will reach the desired outcome, then the behavior needed to produce that writing will not result (466). As Shaughnessy has explained, "When performance improves, belief in one's abilities increases" (125). Similarly, when "belief increases, performance improves" (McCarthy et al. 466).
For traditional students who do not consider the writing task as significant or serious, and who do not have the strong motivation to write, the quality of the final product tends to reflect these attitudes. Sharon Pianko studied the writing behaviors of 17 community college students (7 traditional; 10 adult), who were given an entire afternoon, one day a week, for five weeks to write an essay from among five topic choices. Pianko found that the average student spent 38.85 minutes from beginning to end for an average-length paper of 361 words (9).

When students were interviewed, they accounted for the short duration of writing time by stating, "That's all I had to say." Therefore, compared to the adult students who spent on the average 8.52 more minutes composing the essays, traditional students simply wanted to finish the task as quickly as possible. The quality of the final essays written by traditional students, then, did not give a true picture of what they could produce if they had had greater motivation. Pianko concluded from these findings that "such responses revealed a lack of commitment to the writing" (9). The writing task was perceived by many traditional students as a something which should be finished quickly and with as little effort as possible (10).
Motivation to revise

There is general agreement in the available research that the effectiveness and the extent to which traditional students revise their writing depends on four factors:

- their inspiration
- their skill in revision
- their understanding of the real reasons and goals for revising
- situational variables in the revision process

Inspiration:

To begin with, the extent to which student writers revise is dependent upon their level of inspiration. In her study of the revision processes of student writers and experienced adult writers over a three-year period, Sommers found student writers use the term "inspiration" to describe the level of ease or difficulty in writing. If the students handle the writing with ease and with minor frustrations over word choices and sentence development, then they see no reason to revise (382). Consequently, if students do not see revision as involving further development and/or modifications of ideas, then they see little use for revision because they have
been "inspired" and thus believe they have said all they have to say (382).

Skill level:

Researchers who have studied the capability of students to spot their errors and subsequently correct them say that student ability or skill, not motivation, is the key in revision. "Error" can be defined as a deviation from what is commonly held to be correct, and error is supposedly identified through the activities of proofreading and editing. Linda Flower, John R. Hayes, Linda Carey, Karen Schriver, and James Stratman noted that while teachers may think detecting even common, obvious errors is a relatively simple task for students, the opposite may be true (39).

The researchers claim that traditional student writers in the composition classroom do not take advantage of opportunities for revising their work because they lack the knowledge to do so. Therefore, students' failure to revise may be a failure even to detect problems. "The revision process may end at the beginning as the writer enters the constructive process of evaluation highly equipped with a limited set of intentions or an inadequate representation of either plan or text" (39). Traditional students in the composition classroom, then, need to have a sufficient amount
of information at their disposal to even re-examine their writing in the first place, let alone to recognize and correct proofreading errors (19).

But students' skill in the revision process is dependent upon a second factor—knowledge. "Knowing when to use knowledge can be as difficult as acquiring it" (Flower et al. 20). Because revision depends upon the dual process of evaluation and strategy selection, traditional student writers may not have the knowledge to utilize either process. This knowledge can be grouped into three main classes: 1) the goals or objectives the writer has; 2) problem representation; and 3) the use of revision strategies (21). Research on revision indicates that during the process of error detection, traditional student writers fail to understand the problems represented by the text or fail to determine the goals and criteria they should be using (29). "Revision depends heavily on both skill in reading the text and on the adequacy of one's planning and one's repertory of standards" (Flower et al. 29). In other words, the writer must be able to understand both external and internal representation of the text in order to revise errors successfully (32).
Understanding of reasons and goals:

Besides the difficulties that lack of skill and knowledge pose for traditional student writers, they may also possess insufficient understanding of the reasons and goals for revising. In the composition classroom, student writers are uncomfortable using the words "revision" or "revising" and more comfortable using terms such as "marking out, reviewing and slashing and throwing out" (Sommers, 381). Interestingly, these students see the revision process as a "rewording activity," in which lexical changes are the major changes the students make because "economy is their goal" (Sommers, 381). In addition, they view the thesaurus as a resource containing an abundance of alternate word choices. They believe that finding these alternate choices is the reason for revising and that if they do so, many of the problems in their essays will disappear (381).

In addition to understanding the revision process merely as a word-altering activity, some students perceive the revision process primarily as an exercise in producing clean copy, ignoring any concern for developing ideas (Perl, 334). In other words, because some traditional student writers become so involved with how the paper looks, they tend to devote less attention to the actual composing of the essay. Pianko discovered this behavior in her student writers. They
remarked that if they had spent more time on their essays, it would have been to "rewrite" (recopy) the essay, making it neater (9).

For some traditional students, planning and revising are not understood of as necessary stages in writing, while proofreading is nothing more than a "fruitless search for misspellings" (East and Strahl, 271). Accordingly, "revision" was an alien act to well over 70% of these traditional students who declined the opportunity to revise their themes during a first-week placement test, even though many risked being placed into a non-credit remedial class (East and Strahl, 272). For many traditional students in the composition classroom, revision is not only largely neglected, but a first draft as the final draft is often finished moments before class begins (271). So we see that traditional writers often lack an understanding of the real reasons and goals for revising in the first place.

Many traditional student writers are rule-bound in their approach to revision, and they tend not to be as concerned with the specific problems of their text (Sommers, 383). "The students decide to stop revising when they decide that they have not violated any of the rules for revising" (383). The problem with students revising, then, is not their lack of doing so. Instead, as Sommers discovered, they fail to see
that revising goes beyond changing a word or phrase here and there. For traditional student writers, then, revision is more often looked upon with a lack of interest, and is understood as a passive rather than an active part of the composing process. Equipped with little motivation to revise, traditional students' writers fail to understand its significance.

In addition to those students who are rule-bound in their approach to revision, there also appear to be some traditional student writers who are motivated to revise because they believe their task is to "clean up speech" (Sommers, 381). Essentially, they make a distinction between a written product and speech, for they see writing, unlike speech, able to be reread (Sommers, 381). In fact, these student writers are only motivated to change repetitious words, for example, if they can hear the lexical repetition. As a result, they do not see that by merely changing a repetitious word, they may not be changing text for meaning, a consideration that Sommers refers to as "conceptual repetition" (382). She believes that students are unable to "see" revision as a process and are unable to "re-view" their work (382). Traditional student writers need to be motivated enough to understand and believe that revision can help them produce better writing.
Situational variables:

Besides the skills of traditional student writers and the understanding of reasons and goals that they might gain, there are also a number of situational variables that will determine the effectiveness of and the extent to which traditional student writers revise. Faigley and Witte point out that "Revisions of inexperienced student writers often do not improve their texts because such writers tend to revise locally, ignoring the situational constraints" (411). According to Faigley and Witte, there are several factors which a writer should consider: the purpose of the text; the format; the writer's knowledge of audience, subject, and the writing task; the level of formality, and the expected length of the task and of the finished product (410-411). These variables appear to be of so much value that writing skill might be defined in part as the ability to respond to them (410). For Faigley and Witte, successful revision does not result from the number of changes a writer makes within the text, but the extent to which the revisions bring the text closer to meeting the demands of the writing situation.

Traditional students as non-revisers

We have seen that many traditional student writers lack the inclination to go back over their writing, to rethink,
refocus, and refine it (Perl, 20). Thus, many of these might be classified as "non-revisers," a term describing those writers who tend to make few, if any, revisions.

Non-revisers seem to correct grammatical errors more than they revise for meaning; they seem more concerned with changes that do not alter meaning; they seem to pay more attention to neatness than to revising; and they appear to lack the knowledge for revising their work. Furthermore, they often have trouble in distinguishing between the internal and external viewing of the text in the revision process. Thus these non-revisers seem to believe that revision matters little. Indeed, for a good number of traditional student writers the word "revision" denotes "punishment," according to Erika Lindemann (181). Because of this negative aura surrounding revision, some traditional students are more likely to view revision as an indictment of their writing and as a tedious exercise in finding the inadequacies in their paper.

Most traditional student writers, Lindemann noted, have had little experience with actually rewriting a piece. For them, rewriting a paper occurs more often after the paper has received a grade (28). Inexperienced student writers typically do not stop to reread, and if they do revise during composing, they almost always limit their revisions to
correcting errors (Faigley and Witte, 407). Interestingly, seventy-six percent in the Pianko study almost always thought their writing to be "complete" when turned in, even though most admitted that their first was their final draft (12).

**Extensive revisers**

Compared to the nonrevisers, who consistently revise very little or not at all, traditional student writers who are extensive revisers identify their task of making changes as an important step in the process of writing. As extensive revisers, they also identify the task of revising consistently (Beach, 163). Beach characterizes this group of traditional student writers as "extensive revisers," meaning they make substantial changes in form and content (163).

As extensive revisers, traditional students tend to think of the task of free-writing a first draft as a temporary activity designed to generate ideas but which would need to be clarified and reformulated. For some traditional student writers, revising is a process of making major changes and generalizing about the different parts of their drafts, because they think of their essays in holistic terms (Beach, 162). Furthermore, extensive revisers appear to map out a "blueprint" of the main points that they wish to carry over from one draft to the next. Thus, revising for this group of
traditional student writers entails a series of drafts which develops as changes are made from one draft to the next.

Thus, while many traditional students still tend to perceive revision less seriously than do non-traditional adult students, their beliefs about their abilities to revise can affect the revision process. For most traditional student writers, revision is dependent upon their level of inspiration, their skill in revision, their level of understanding of the reasons and goals for revising, and the situational variables which are present in the revision process. Many traditional student writers, then, tend to be passive in their approach to revision strategies.

Motivation and Revision of Adult Students

There appear to be three definite areas involving revision in which adult writers differ significantly from traditional-aged writers: their preconceived notions of the revision process, their behavior during revising and the attention they give to it, and the textual changes they make. Adult students tend to share the view with the extensive revisers mentioned above that revision is a necessary step.
Preconceived notions of revision process

Adult writers tend to have some preconceived ideas about the task of revising and show great willingness to revise what they write (Crabbe, 8). This willingness may be a function of high motivation for achievement in general or for grades in particular, but it is usually expressed as dissatisfaction with the piece or fear that it will be misunderstood (Crabbe, 8). Furthermore, adult learners differ from younger students in that they are likely to spend more time outside class revising essays and preparing for class (Connors, 265).

In addition to their great willingness to revise, adult learners appear to see some value or helpfulness in peer criticism of their papers (Connors, 265). Indeed, the benefits of peer editing may even carry over into the real world of work. "Outside of schools, adult writers voluntarily establish collegial editorial groups when they are writing something important" (Harwood, 282).

Attention to revision

Equally important as the preconceived notions that adults have of the revision process is the degree of attention that adult writers devote to revision. According to East and Strahl, there is a significant difference in the attitudes projected by adult and traditional students regarding revision (273). Whereas the
younger students tend not to see planning and revision as necessary stages within the composing process, adult students are highly cognizant of revision as a separate and crucial stage.

However, even for adult students who may have good intentions to revise, their efforts may be hampered by gaps in their knowledge about the composing process, including revision (Aldrich, 287). In her study of 254 top and mid-level managers, shortcomings in both their technical and attitudinal problems emerged. For one of their tasks, these writers were asked to revise a sample sentence and their responses were coded "improved" if they corrected the problems, "no better" or "worse" if they did not improve the sentence, or "ok" if the respondent considered the sentence ok and did not rewrite it (Aldrich, 286). She noted that of the responses, 101 of the 165 fell into the "no better," "worse," and "ok" categories. Only 64 improved the sentence. Of these, 14 were among the 30 who rated themselves as excellent writers, 37 among the 66 who rated themselves above average, and 15 among the rest. "These figures show little difference in the way the two groups who considered themselves most capable writers revised the language" (287).

Some adult writers tend to focus their attention on revision depending on their purpose in writing. The adult writers in Crabbe's study read through their pieces of writing at least once and sometimes as often as four or five times (9). Most of this
group seemed to be pleased with what they had written. But those who wrote in the reflexive mode were more likely to "engage in lengthy contemplation and were more likely to be partially or wholly dissatisfied with what they had written." On the other hand, those who wrote only in the extensive mode were likely to "read through once as they proofread and to be satisfied or fairly satisfied with the piece" (Crabbe, 9). In contemplating what they wrote, adult writers often asked, "Is it correct?" ("I'll recopy it and write it all nice") and "Does it say what I was thinking as I wrote" ("I think it communicates the event clearly" or "While I was writing the paper I sensed certain feelings being put into it, but when I reread it the experience seemed to fall apart") indicating that they do express concern about the final product (Crabbe, 10).

**Categories of textual changes**

Non-traditional students approach the revision process with more enthusiasm and momentum than do their traditional counterparts, and as a result they employ a number of distinguishable strategies in the revision process. Among the strategies that they use are these two: they make extensive, all inclusive changes and they revise to make meaning changes rather than surface-based changes. Adult students have this very definite sense of revision because they see writing as a logical
means to a desired end (East and Strahl, 272), as we have seen earlier.

Extensive changes:

Unlike traditional students, adult writers make changes on all levels, regardless of whether the essay is an early or late version (Crabbe, 10). Furthermore, we can observe in the adult essay a higher syntactic maturity than in the younger student essays (Crabbe, 13). And adult student writers are concerned with expansion—generating prose by embedding and subordinating. Not only do adult writers consider changes within the sentence structure, but they also view revision within the framework of the entire piece of writing, refocusing and reshaping as they go along.

Meaning changes:

The kinds of revisions adult writers make depend somewhat on the type of writing produced (Crabbe, 8). For those adult writers who focus their writing only on the extensive mode (conveying a message or communication to another in an impersonal style), proofreading and minor stylistic corrections seem to be their major post-writing activity (Crabbe, 8). But for adult writers who write in the extensive and reflexive modes (focusing on the writer's thoughts and feelings in a personal style), their
revisions are usually more extensive. Revision, for adult writers, goes beyond the practice of making changes here and there; it requires a "re-visioning" of the whole product.

Pedagogical Implications

Since adult students already have formed some preconceived notions about the revision process and since they devote more attention to revision and to textual changes than do traditional students, the composition teacher should focus on those activities which will help adult writers become better revisers. Specifically, the composition teacher can work with adult students on revising the "parts" of each essay more extensively, as adults tend to focus on the whole essay in revision. Furthermore, composition teachers can devise additional ways of making peer editing a useful tool in the revision process. Also, composition teachers can share with their students how they practice revision. Finally, to understand how revision takes place, adult students can examine versions of the same paper before and after revisions are made.

Revising parts of the essay

Adult students need the guidance to learn the process of analyzing the separate parts of a whole essay. By separating an essay into its parts, they have a better chance of solving the
problems within the writing. In my experience with adult learners, I found it helpful to spend some time on in-class revisions of the introduction, body, and concluding parts of a paper. I had students work at revising their own papers early in the course, for I wanted to help preserve their self-esteem. For example, after being assigned to write a persuasive essay, students were told to bring their introductions to class; and we worked on establishing purpose, situational context, statement of problem, and voice. During another class period, students examined body paragraphs for topic sentences, details, examples, transitions, and clarity. In part of another class period, students revised their conclusions for adequate summary of ideas. Thus, I found it beneficial to "walk the students through" many of the concerns they should consider when writing their essays.

Peer editing in revision

Slaninka found that peer editing gives adults a chance to become involved in synthesis, evaluation, and analysis and is an effective way for students to share common concerns about writing (17). Therefore, for some assignments, I had students bring several copies of a specific part of their essay to class for peer editing. At times, I paired weaker writers with stronger writers, put the students into groups of four or five for more extensive feedback, or as a class we revised sample paragraphs using the overhead. This pairing or grouping helped students see individual
differences in composing and in revising. Such a grouping might also help students to see the importance of considering an audience for their writing, especially for assignments that involve more objective kinds of writing, such as descriptions and summaries. Peer review reduces faculty time in evaluation and gives adult students a chance to become involved in synthesis, evaluation, and analysis (Slaninka, 16).

But peer evaluation might also be an opportunity for adult students to share common concerns about writing and to learn from the strengths and weaknesses they see on other papers. In fact, Connors notes the benefits of traditional students seeing the improvements adult students were able to make through time spent on revision and editing (199). Peer editing, then, enables adult students to both ask for help and to provide it for others.

Teachers as revisers

Another way that we can help adult students revise more effectively is to share with them the ways in which we as composition teachers approach revision. For instance, teachers might devote some class time to a discussion of how they achieve "distancing" or what the benefits are in placing a piece of writing aside for a period of time. Composition teachers might discuss, too, the benefits of using different colors of paper or ink for each succeeding draft.
Besides a discussion of how they revise, composition teachers might also show on the overhead an example of each succeeding draft of a paper that they have produced. Even though the research has shown that adult writers make extensive revisions, they still need to be aware of further possibilities for improving their revision techniques. For example, in one of my classes of adult learners, I discovered that they were having problems arranging the parts of a research paper into clearly defined, sequential paragraphs. It seemed logical at that time to talk about the use of transitions as unifying devices and how easily transitions can be incorporated into writing to achieve unity. We looked at one draft of a paper that I had written, in which the use of transitions dominated the revisions for that paper. Using that paper, we examined how the process of revising beginning and ending sentences in paragraphs can lead to better organization and coherence within the whole essay.

Samples of revised papers

Another way that composition teachers can help adult learners become better revisers is to provide them with copies of sample pages before they were revised and after. By comparing the two sample versions, adult students might gain additional ideas and suggestions for revising their own papers. The composition teacher needs to point out the various kinds of changes that were made such as meaning changes, changes to accommodate the needs of
audience, changes in tone, organizational changes, and stylistic changes. For example, adult students might not think about making parallel construction kinds of changes until they see how such a stylistic revision can make meaning clearer.

It also helps students to incorporate revision into their process of writing by having them revise a sample paper for overall readability. I found that my adult students were more apt to revise their own papers and to make more extensive revisions after they discovered many of the shortcomings of a paper written by a student writer like themselves.

Summary

Identifying the revision strategies that are characteristic of adult writers can be useful to instructors in planning appropriate kinds of activities in revision. Some general guidelines for the composition instructor might be to devote class time to the actual practice of revising the introductory, body, and concluding paragraphs for each assigned essay, since adult students tend to think in terms of the "whole" essay when they revise. This can be accomplished by discussing and practicing such activities as writing topic sentences, expanding paragraphs with details, overcoming wordiness, and using appropriate transitions. Furthermore, composition instructors can talk about their own revision process, including an example of a revised
piece of writing on the overhead. Therefore, by understanding the processes that they use, adult writers can refine and perfect the strategies that they are now using.
CHAPTER V: SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR RESEARCH

This chapter will summarize my findings from the previous three chapters. In addition, I will discuss some of the directions for further research in the motivation and revision strategies of adult learners. Finally, I will offer some closing remarks.

Summary

Adult learners differ from traditional students in terms of identity, needs, motivation, and approach to revision. Because of these differences, teachers must consider certain pedagogical needs when structuring courses for adult learners, designing assignments, selecting teaching methods, and working with adults in the composition classroom. This section will summarize the significant ways in which adult students differ from traditional students and will reiterate those teaching techniques that can specifically benefit adult students.

While adults are likely to be more serious about their approach to education than are traditional students, they also tend to be less confident about competing academically. Most adults resume their education knowing what they want and are likely to use the knowledge they gain almost immediately in their jobs or in solving problems. In regard to achievement, adult
students tend to be superior to their younger counterparts because of their commitment to their education, their practicality, their career orientation, and their immediate use of knowledge.

The presence of adult students in the composition classroom benefits teachers and traditional students alike, for adults have a vast amount of experience from which to draw upon during class discussions. But adults also have special needs. Composition instructors must make allowances for the anxiety that many adults experience by providing, for example, a syllabus for their classes specifying the requirements, due dates for assignments, and course policies. To help ease the transition to college life, composition teachers can also provide skill development in mechanics and grammar, encourage adults to ask questions, and offer information about tutorial services.

Besides defining who adult learners are and what special needs they have, attention must also be given to the life-changing factors that motivate adults to resume their education in the first place. Adults are also motivated to resume their education according to whether they view learning as goal-oriented, activity-oriented, or learning-oriented.

Because of their high degree of motivation, adults are more apt to have a positive attitude towards writing and to have a greater tolerance for remediation than are traditional students. Some adults need to see themselves as writers who have a wealth of
knowledge to incorporate into their writing. In order to help students tap that knowledge, composition instructors can encourage the use of journal writing and free-writing in the classroom.

Specific adult-oriented pedagogical methods for the composition teacher include using a variety of teaching approaches such as the conference and process approaches. In addition, composition instructors can talk about their own writing and can use assignments that focus, in part, on "real-world" writing tasks that will benefit adults in their present jobs. In order to counteract the lack of confidence and self-esteem of some adult learners, composition teachers might consider textbooks with a broader appeal and consider the content of the course which will best meet the needs of adult students. And, to alleviate the anxiety that some adults experience, composition teachers can repeat directions, provide individualized help, and balance positive remarks and suggestions for improvement on papers adult students write.

Not only do traditional and adult students differ in their motivation, but they also differ in their strategies for revision. Adult students tend to see revisions as a definite step in the composing process and therefore spend more time revising. The primary focus for this study is on the revision process of adult students, especially as it compares to the revision process of traditional students. The revision process of adult students
differs from traditional students in terms of preconceived ideas regarding the revision process, attention given to revision, and textual categories of changes. In revising, adults make changes on all levels; they make meaning changes rather than surface-based changes; and they tend to generate more prose through revision. In fact, unlike traditional students, adult students see revision as a necessary stage in the composing process. For them, revision is likely to occupy a great deal of their time outside of class.

To help adult students further with revising, composition teachers can utilize peer editing activities within the classroom. This provides students with knowledge of individual differences in composing and revising, and enables adults to sharpen their reading and audience analysis skills.

Discussion

Because statistics indicate that greater numbers of adults are returning to college, there are certain areas in composition that need additional research. Not only must the research examine returning students who are pursuing a degree, but the it should also explore the needs of adults who return to college and take only a course to upgrade their job skills. Furthermore, since much of the current research focuses primarily on the motivation and revision strategies of traditional students, there is a need for research devoted to the motivation and revision of returning
adult students. In particular, future research should further examine the composing process of adult students, the social aspects of adult students in the composition classroom, and additional pedagogical implications for composition teachers. Because some of the existing studies, such as the ones conducted by Pianko and Crabbe, have certain limitations in terms of an insufficient data base, more extensive studies need to be done with greater numbers of students.

Instead of simply analyzing the motivation and revision strategies of adult students as Crabbe and Connors have done, further research could focus on differences between the composing processes of adults and traditional students. For example, research is needed in the areas of how adult writers incorporate audience awareness into their writing and how much attention they give to purpose. In addition, research could analyze the role that prewriting plays in the composing process of adult writers. Also, what kinds of writing do adult students tend to produce? Do they rely heavily on personal experience in their writing?

While research focusing on the composing process of adult learners is needed, it is equally important to examine the social aspects of adult learners in the composition classroom. For example, research might explore the extent to which adult students collaborate effectively with traditional students during small group sessions or during peer editing. Furthermore, since adult
learners bring certain "social skills" to the classroom from their jobs and home life, research might further examine how these factors affect adult learners' composing processes.

But more specifically, further research could explore the pedagogical implications for teaching returning adult students. The special needs of adult students should be examined more fully, especially those classroom methods such as the use of transparencies and the blackboard for ensuring that adult students not only "hear" important concepts but "see" them as well. Besides the writing focus, research needs to address the degree of ease or difficulty with which adult students read textbooks, tests, and handouts. For example, research might look at the selection of or lack of textbooks designed specifically for adult learners. How do these texts address adults learners specifically? What role does readability play in meeting the needs of adult students?

Conclusion

We need to develop more effective methods of reaching returning adult students so that their presence in our classes will benefit them in the best ways possible. Also, we need to consider the changes that we as composition instructors must make in order to accommodate larger numbers of adult students in our classes.
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