Sourcework, Second Edition

Author:	Nancy E. Dolahite & Julie Huan (2012)	
Publisher:	Boston, MA: Heinle Cengage Learning	
Pages	**ISBN**	**Price**
222 pages	978-1-111-35209-7	$40.84 USD

According to the authors, this book is recommended for upper-intermediate to advanced ESL (English as a second language) students who are enrolled in advanced writing courses and "who have had exposure to basic rhetorical styles, and have experience writing essays with a thesis statement and supporting points" (p. xi). It is clear that the book assumes a working knowledge of thesis statements, paragraph development, and other basic writing skills. *Sourcework* gives limited, if any, explanation to these skills and seeks to build upon them. As explained in the section for teachers, the overarching goal of the book is to create a learning community in which students collaborate in their exploration of and writing about given topics and the introduction to each chapter explicitly states the goals and the content for the chapter.

The text is organized into two main sections. Part One, *The Writing Process*, is divided into six chapters that aim to help students understand how to write a research essay by walking them through the steps. Each chapter follows a similar

format providing: an introduction; a writing concept or skill; a comprehension check activity for the writing concept presented; production activities; and a section that helps students apply the concepts into their own writing (Chapters 2-6 only). The skills presented in the chapters help students to learn the writing process, from brainstorming to a polished paper.

Part Two, *Sources for Research*, is a compilation of articles that have been selected on three general topics: social change, globalization, and technology. These authentic articles, which are selected from various popular sources such as the New York Times and the UN Chronicle, are provided as a resource for students and teachers as they move through the writing process and write a research paper. Each section includes pre-reading activities and potential research questions. As students progress through the first half of the book, they will compose a research paper that is based on readings and discussions from a theme in the second half of the text. Thus, the two sections are used simultaneously. Part One is also designed in such a way that it can be revisited and activities can be reused with a different topic if the teacher wishes to have students write more than one research paper during the semester.

As can be seen starting in the very first chapter, one of the strengths of this text is that, when appropriate, it gives a numbered list of techniques, characteristics, steps, or criteria that students can easily understand and remember for different writing concepts. For example, when presenting paraphrasing, the text gives three criteria that characterize a good paraphrase:

1. A good paraphrase has the same meaning as the original.
2. A good paraphrase is different enough from the original to be considered your own writing.
3. A good paraphrase refers directly to (or cites) the original source.

An additional strength of the book is that it takes examples from many of the articles found in the reading section. By doing this, students are more familiar with the context of the examples given because they have already completed a portion of the reading. Even when students have not yet read the article from which the example was taken, they find the articles more familiar once they do read the article, and they recognize sections taken and studied earlier.

Furthermore, the *activities* sub-sections within the chapters often ask the reader to use the skills presented in the chapters by looking analytically at essays in Appendix A or at articles in Part Two. One example of this is found in Chapter Four; in the activity section following *Building Cohesion*, Activity 1 asks students to choose one of the three essays in Appendix A and analyze it for the cohesion techniques presented in the chapter. This not only draws students' attention to

the techniques, but also gives them an opportunity to see them used in an authentic text.

One weakness of this book, however, is the outdated reading material found in Part Two. Although the book, which was updated in 2012, highlights that the sources have been updated, a number of articles are more than ten years old. As a result, instructors using the book may find it necessary to supplement with more current articles about the given topics, as the content may be outdated. A second weakness is that the book includes little to no focus on grammar. In my class, I have had to supplement this text with a handbook that serves as a writing resource and a grammar book for students.

By just glancing at the content of this book, one might assume that, after using such a text, students would be able to write an "academic research paper." The term *research paper* is used throughout the book; however, I believe that the use of this term is misleading since the examples given throughout the book encourage the inclusion of nonacademic personal opinions and anecdotes. The introduction claims to "take students beyond writing based on personal experience" (p. xi) and into a more academically focused world of writing evidence-based papers. Though the book does encourage writing with sources, it does not encourage students to abandon writing about their personal experiences. This fusion of styles can be seen most clearly in the research questions provided in Part Two. For example, one research question asks

How are cultural attitudes about heroes the same or different? Select two cultures and compare their beliefs about heroes. In addition to evidence from the articles, use your own experience, if appropriate, to support your ideas. (p. 172)

Based on this type of prompt, students would mostly likely produce papers written in the first person that include pieces of evidence that support their opinions and experiences.

In English for Academic Purposes (EAP) writing courses, the goal is to incorporate writing assignments similar to those found in discipline courses in which students will subsequently enroll. I believe that *Sourcework* seeks to do just this. By providing articles to read, discuss, and synthesize that later become the focus of their research paper, this imitates an assignment that students might be asked to write in an undergraduate course. I do, however, find that it quite misleading that the book encourages students to write in the first person and tell about personal experiences, as the example above shows, since this is generally discouraged in most academic fields.

Considering other theories and pedagogical methods, this book teaches a *process approach*, an approach to writing that informs students that writing is a process by which ideas are discovered and generated (Susser, 1994), with a focus on multi-level interventions. The intervention provided in this text is both micro-writing skills such as citation and cohesion and macro-writing skills such as organization and content selection. This process and intervention approach to writing is clear in the text, which beginnings by teaching students to read with purpose and gather ideas from their readings. From this collection, students analyze the ideas, mixing them with their own previous ideas, and organize them into a draft. The book encourages several group workshops, an example of peer intervention, and teaches students to draft and revise their own work. The chapters and exercises themselves are a form of teaching and intervention that encourage logical writing. While the book doesn't give models that induce "formulaic, empty writing" as Macbeth (2002) puts it, it does give helpful guidelines that are easy for students to follow.

As the authors suggest, I agree that this book would best serve an undergraduate class that focuses on writing research style papers. I don't believe that it would serve graduate students well, as they would need a more tailored course that teaches nuanced features of higher-level, field-specific academic writing. I would add that, because of its lack of grammatical focus, it would also best serve a course that does not intend to focus on grammar. While it could be used for other general reading/synthesis writing classes, instructors would likely need to supplement to provide students with a more broad exposure to writing styles and skills. As I mentioned before, due to the difficulty of the reading resources provided in Part Two, I would not recommend this text for intermediate students; rather, I would recommend this text for advanced ESL students. I also agree that this text is not appropriate for students who are not familiar with writing basics. Students who do not have such a foundation might find this text extremely challenging, and teachers with such students would likely have to spend a significant amount of time covering basic skills by supplementing from more elementary writing textbooks.

References

Macbeth, K. (2010). Deliberate false provisions: The use and usefulness of models in learning academic writing. *Journal of Second Language Writing, 19*, 33-48.

Schuemann, C. (2008). Myth 2: Teaching citation is someone else's job. In J. Reid, (Ed.), *Writing myths: Applying second language research to the classroom*, (pp. 18-41). Ann Arbor:University of Michigan Press.

Susser, B. (1994). Process approaches in ESL/EFL writing instruction. *Journal of Second Language Writing, 3*, 31-47.

Reviewed by: Laura Ballard
Michigan State University
Ballar94@msu.edu