

Foreword

I was intrigued to receive from an American publisher the other day instructions to authors which included the information that I might quote, free of charge, a passage of 150 words from a text in the humanities, but only 50 words from a scientific text. So there *are* modes of writing appropriate to different disciplines and they even have a commercial rating in the eyes of the law! When university subject specialists and language specialists get together to consider these modes of writing appropriate to the various disciplines, we may hope to learn a great deal we don't know today, not in crude terms of commercial value, but in terms of the learning strategies by which specialist knowledge is generated and the strategies by which it is communicated. As I read the chapters of this book, it seemed to me that the off-campus writing workshops (a feature of the cross-disciplinary program from which the book was written) promised real progress in this direction.

As I see it, the message of this book lies above all in what it implies about *learning*. No one who reads it with understanding can continue to confuse rote learning with real learning—however deeply engrained that confusion is in our current modes of teaching and assessment.

This is a pioneer effort: the work of my colleagues and myself in London University has been widely taken up and applied in elementary and secondary schools, but there has hitherto been very little evidence of impact upon universities. Because this book both pursues theoretical issues and speaks from first-hand experience of their applications to practice, I believe it will be influential both in universities and in schools. I have read it with a growing respect for the enterprise that lies behind it, and the invitation to write this brief foreword is therefore a source of pride and pleasure to me.

James Britton