

## 7 Transfer in First-Year Writing

This chapter begins our explicit turn to writing studies scholarship on transfer. We start this section of our Reference Guide with first-year writing for two reasons. First, as our readers will recognize, first-year writing is the most visible site for transfer research in writing studies journals, in part due to the long-standing sets of debates around the role of FYW in relation to writing in the university and beyond. And although it's clear that other sites and sub-fields within writing studies have made extensive and important contributions to transfer scholarship, with internal debates of their own, conversations about FYW, and FYW pedagogy, often dominate the field because of the central role that the first-year writing classroom has in the overall disciplinary formation and application of writing studies. Second, because FYW often represents the entry point for students' exposure to teaching for writing-related transfer at the college level, we use this chapter to launch toward our expanded discussions about transfer in writing across the curriculum, transfer in writing centers, and transfer from school to work that follow.

We must acknowledge the number of excellent syntheses on transfer and first-year writing—such as Moore's (2012) "Mapping the Questions: The State of Writing-Related Transfer Research," Moore's (2017) "Five Essential Principles about Writing Transfer," and Qualley's (2016) "Building a Conceptual Topography of the Transfer Terrain"—that have preceded this Reference Guide. This chapter likewise offers a synthesis but focuses almost exclusively on transfer and first-year writing and explores the transdisciplinary possibilities of that focus by referring to findings, insights, and possibilities from out-of-field chapters (1–6). As Moore (2012) has documented in "Map-

ping the Questions,” most transfer scholarship within writing studies centers on seven names: Perkins and Salomon; Beach; Tuomi-Gröhn and Engeström; and Meyer and Land. Yet, as we have documented, transfer research is complex and far-ranging and draws from fields as diverse as human resource management and physical education. Qualley (2016), similarly, and drawing inspiration from Driscoll and Wells’ (2012) invitation to “simultaneously focus on multiple theories of transfer,” advocates for linkages, connections, and deliberate concept-building both within and beyond writing studies.

In writing this chapter and others throughout this volume, and particularly in synthesizing our conclusion chapter, we found that pursuing such linkages has the potential to not only broaden and enliven our views of transfer but helps stage new transdisciplinary theories altogether. Of happy note are the already existing similarities between research in first-year writing and research on transfer in second language writing; research on transfer in literacy studies; research on transfer in various education-oriented fields (e.g., medicine, sports education); and research in cognitive and organizational psychology. In this chapter, we extend those alignments for the purposes of enhancing transfer research and pedagogy in first-year writing. In what follows, we draw together those connections, illuminate connections as yet unseen, and press for more scholarly and pedagogical exchange between writing studies and this volume’s aforementioned fields.

## THE ROLE OF LOCAL AND GENERAL KNOWLEDGE

The current emphasis on teaching for transfer in the first-year writing classroom stems, in part, from a decades-old debate about the value of first-year writing, and specifically from early critiques of the efficacy of general writing skills instruction (GWSI). In this section, we present earlier debates of the 1980s through the 1990s as they centered around two competing principles: (a) the view that writing was a radically local and situated act that could only be learned through immersion and participation within a discourse community; and (b) the view that there was credence in teaching for generalizable writing skills and that these skills were especially necessary for students at the outset of their college writing trajectory.

As early as 1987, McCarthy’s study of Dave, a first-year student who struggled to write across three different and unfamiliar academic

writing situations—composition, biology, and poetry—made transfer (or lack of transfer) a central concern for first-year writing. As McCarthy chronicles, Dave struggled to use what he had learned in first-year writing in his other courses; in fact, “in each new class Dave believed that the writing he was doing was totally unlike anything he’d done before” (p. 243) even though the writing tasks had some similarities (e.g., informational assignments written for the instructor as audience). McCarthy’s work supports a focus on writing as a social and context-dependent activity and suggests “explicitly training students in [the] assessment process” (p. 262) of contextual and discourse community cues as they construct the rhetorical expectations within each setting.

Dave’s experience highlights a core challenge for first-year writing: how can one course address generalized principles of academic writing while also emphasizing the situated and localized conventions and ways of knowing and writing within disciplines? Carter (1990) expounded on this quandary between general and local knowledge—attributing each approach to cognitivist (general) and social (local) theories of writing—and emphasized a pluralistic theory in which general and local knowledge interact in writing development. Building on Carter, Foertsch (1995) also sought to eschew binaries between general (acontextual) and local (context-dependent) writing knowledge for a new basis: a synthesis of social and cognitive theories of writing, memory, and application. In particular, Foertsch called upon cognitive psychology to argue for “a teaching approach that uses higher level abstractions and specific examples *in combination* [for] promoting transfer-of-learning [rather than] either method alone” (p. 364).

Petraglia’s (1995) provocative collection, *Reconceiving Writing, Rethinking Writing Instruction*, offered additional perspectives and asked if teaching students generic writing skills in first-year writing made sense if writing is a situated, contextually embedded activity. Contributors questioned how a class based on the autonomous model of literacy (where a universal set of writing skills can be generalized across all contexts) could possibly help students learn to write across contexts. As Russell (1995) famously lamented: “To try to teach students to improve their writing by taking a GWSI course is something like trying to teach people to improve their ping-pong, jacks, volleyball, basketball, hockey, and so on by attending a course in general ball-handling” (p. 58). Interestingly, as we described in our chapter on “Transfer in Sports, Medical, Aviation, and Military Training,” these

very same debates (literalized in those cases) were also happening in sports education.

These theoretical and pedagogical conundrums evoked discussion about whether FYW had value for transfer and set the tone for the much longer pedagogical debate around the efficacy of teaching general versus local skills and knowledge. They also made clear that transfer must be a key concern for first-year writing. Debates around local and global knowledge remain important for teaching for transfer and are articulated through research on genre pedagogies (Bawarshi, 2003; Bazerman, 1997; Beaufort, 2007, 2012; Clark & Hernandez, 2011; Devitt, 2007; Devitt et al., 2004), writing about writing approaches (Bird et al., 2019; Downs & Wardle, 2007; Wardle, 2009), the teaching for transfer approach (Yancey et al., 2014), and the most recent turn to transfer and threshold concepts (Wardle & Adler-Kassner, 2019). We explore these pedagogical approaches in depth at the end of this chapter.

Ten years after an apex of local and general knowledge debates in the 1990s, Smit (2004) challenged the field directly to engage with questions of transfer by asking: “In what sense can various kinds of knowledge be transferred from one situation to another, or learned in one context and applied to another? (p. 119). This and other questions ushered in a phase of classroom-based research on the paradox of transfer and local/global knowledge. Two prominent studies include Beaufort (2007) and Wardle (2007). Building on the theoretical work of Carter (1990) and Foertsch (1995), Beaufort and Wardle both present the case, derived from qualitative research findings, for a synthesized local-general approach to teaching for transfer in first-year writing through an emphasis on meta-awareness and practices of generalization along with sustained practice in discourse community specific writing.

Beaufort’s longitudinal case study of Tim across four years of college and preliminary results from Wardle’s longitudinal study that followed seven students from first-year writing to their sophomore year both confirmed that writing within the context of schooling, without the institutional or instructional affordances attuned to prompt the transfer of writing-related knowledge, hindered students’ transfer. Beaufort’s Tim, for instance, struggled to navigate the changing demands of his courses and instructors, occasionally resulting in “negative transfer” between FYW and subsequent courses. Negative transfer

refers here to knowledge inappropriately applied across contexts. For Tim, how the genre conventions of the “essay” were explained in FYW differed from genre expectations in other courses, and yet he brought that knowledge to new courses. Wardle’s research participants, while seemingly prepared to transfer writing-related knowledge into their other courses, did not because they “did not *perceive a need* to adopt or adapt most of the writing behaviors they used in FYC for other courses” (2007, p. 76).

Beaufort offers a conceptual model of discourse community knowledge to aid in teaching for transfer that focuses on five knowledge domains: writing process knowledge, subject matter knowledge, rhetorical knowledge, genre knowledge, and discourse community knowledge. Together, these five domains provide writers with the discourse community knowledge needed to meet community-based writing expectations while also serving as a generalized heuristic for writing in new communities. Beaufort suggested designing FYW in ways that both practice discourse community writing and aid students in developing meta-awareness of the shifting types of discourse community expectations they will encounter across school courses and disciplines.

This model aimed to teach general heuristics for writing while also facilitating students’ application of those abstractions into localized contexts. Such an approach finds strong resonance with earlier research in both writing studies and psychology on the role of abstract schemata in transfer. For instance, as discussed in Chapter 2, research in the cognitivist tradition argues that prompting participants to draw abstract principles from multiple examples facilitates transfer of learning. That finding pairs closely with Beaufort’s suggestion that students work in multiple writing situations and genres to develop an awareness of abstract principles of writing. Moreover, work in both cognitive and industrial/organizational psychology stresses working comparatively with multiple examples. Our upcoming discussion of the role of rhetorical genre awareness and transfer likewise emphasizes this point.

Wardle’s findings center on meta-awareness and add an emphasis on institutional affordances in priming for transfer post-FYW. Wardle found that “the only ability that students seemed to consistently generalize from one writing task to another [. . .] was meta-awareness about writing” (p. 76) which was aided by “context-specific supports” such as teacher feedback, peer-to-peer exchange and conversation, and

reading or writing in the field of writing studies. These findings led Wardle (2007) to conclude that “*meta-awareness about writing, language, and rhetorical strategies* in FYC may be the most important ability our courses can cultivate” (p. 82). This cultivation depends also on providing a context amenable to transfer—one that treats writing as a situated, sociocultural activity and that takes place within an environment of “context-specific supports.” Such findings put strong responsibility on institutions to provide transfer support; without such external facilitation, students may not be able to activate and put into local practice the general writing-related knowledge learned in FYW. Subsequent chapters on transfer in writing centers and writing across the curriculum programs offer precise recommendations for how to scaffold and build such support over time and across learning contexts.

In later work, Wardle draws on genre theory to continue the critique and conversation that writing is highly situated and context-specific at all levels of activity: procedural, rhetorical, cultural, conventional, and in content (Devitt, 2007; Wardle, 2009). For instance, a study by Wardle (2009) on the problem of “mutt genres” in FYW emphasized the challenges of GWSI for providing meaningful writing pedagogy, especially as it related to the question of local and general knowledge in transfer. Wardle, in this second study, bolstered her prior findings and found that when based in “mutt genres,” a GWSI course “is not overtly discussing academic genres, is not actively teaching toward them, and is not taking steps to help students achieve useful transfer of genre-related skills. . . . FYC is not, then, achieving its official goal of preparing students to write the genres of the academy” (p. 778). In response, Wardle suggests that the field consider letting go “of the impossible goal of teaching students to write in the academy” (p. 783). Given what we know about the relationship between writing and context as well as the limited time that students participate in FYW, Wardle argues that we teach students *about* writing through focus on meta-awareness, as well as procedural and declarative knowledge about writing as sources of general and local writing-related knowledge. Wardle’s suggestion here has subsequently been developed in a recognized FYW approach, writing about writing, with its own theoretical and empirical premises, textbooks, and ongoing lines of inquiry.

While the debate about general and local writing has not been solved, it seems clear that a both/and rather than an either/or formulation is most effective for transfer. It is also apparent that such de-

bates must include context-cues and institutional levers that prompt these cognitive shifts between local and global writing-related knowledge. This final point was first expounded by McCarthy in 1987 and later reaffirmed by Wardle in 2007 and 2009 and highlights how the “the burden for encouraging generalization seems to rest on assignments given in classes beyond FYC” (Wardle, 2007, p. 82). Such a claim requires a stronger relationship between FYW, WAC, WID, and writing centers. Acknowledging the same predicament—the tension between teaching general skills and local genre and discourse community expectations—Fraizer (2010) explores the role that coaching through on-going genre analysis, discourse community analysis, and reflection *beyond* FYW can play in helping students transition from FYW to later situated discourses. Such a suggestion extends Beaufort’s work, especially to post-FYW contexts. Facilitating successful transfer of writing-related knowledge is a whole university affair. Models for writing instruction in FYW need to be accompanied by affordances for transfer post-FYW that can prompt perception of task similarity and thus the process of abstraction, localization, and transfer.

Such findings about the complex and intertwined relationship between local and general knowledge and the need for contextual affordances in encouraging transfer strongly echoes the work in sports education and second language writing, in addition to the theories of cognitive psychology previously discussed. Each of these fields has waded through years of similar theoretical debate and related empirical study. For instance, in sports education, the major paradigm shift toward Teaching Games for Understanding was in direct response to debates around teaching technical skills and the teaching of general processes of game play. In that field, the corollary local/general debate turned toward an emphasis on tactical awareness (which echoes much of how meta-awareness is talked about in writing studies) and which dissolved boundaries between cognitive development and physical activity (Light & Fawns, 2003) for a holistic approach to sports education. As we discussed in “Research on Transfer in Studies of Second Language Writing,” researchers who’ve studied these dynamics have reached two conclusions. First, they suggest that first-year courses with emphasis on ESL writing should work on general writing skills like revision or voice (e.g., Spack, 1988); the second promotes conceptual or genre-based activities that might prepare students explicitly for specific disciplinary courses (e.g., Currie, 1993; Johns, 1995). While

these findings are starker than those in FYW research, they helpfully demonstrate this ongoing conundrum across multiple fields that focus on student writing development.

### THE ROLE OF PRIOR KNOWLEDGE

Research into the role of students' prior knowledge and how student writers make use of that prior knowledge plays an important role in this larger puzzle of what helps or hinders transfer into and from FYW. In this section, we first present findings on the role that genres play as students enter new writing situations. Second, we present studies that consider what prompts the transfer of prior writing-related knowledge at all and how methodological shifts in both data collection and analysis can provide new avenues for inquiry into transfer and the role of prior knowledge in FYW.

#### *Prior Knowledge, Genre Repertoires, and Transfer*

In the US context, rhetorical genre studies has played a critical role in studies of transfer and first-year writing. From a rhetorical genre theory perspective, genres respond to and provide communicative solutions for specific communities' rhetorical situations. In this way, genres engage and perpetuate historical, cultural, and rhetorical situations through writing (Miller, 1984). Important for questions of transfer, and especially the impact of prior genre knowledge, is how genres tend to fuse the writing situation and the writing artifact in the minds of a writer. Think of it this way: when a student enters a particular school context and is given a writing assignment, they pull and deploy genres from memory that link to the exigence *perceived* in such a context and situation. As Nowacek (2011) has helpfully formulated, genres are an exigence for transfer (p. 30). Perception of situation coupled with practice of antecedent genres play a prominent role in genre transfer. Devitt (2007) theorizes this relationship thusly,

The writer moving among locations carries along a set of writing experiences, including genres acquired in those various locations. That set of acquired genres, that genre repertoire, serves as a resource for the writer when encountering an unfamiliar genre. Just as writers perceive unique situations as



somehow similar and so perceive and use the same genre, writers perceive newly encountered situations as sharing some elements with prior situations, and so they use prior genres when writing new ones. It is not the writing skills that are transferring from one situation and genre to another; it is the whole genre. (p. 220)

Because writers interpret new situations from their repertoire of prior genres, it's possible that teaching genres that will repeat or genres that have features that will likely repeat in future genres (like a literature review in academic settings, for instance) will aid in transfer. Devitt (2004) argued that antecedent genres are primers for future genre use and educators have the responsibility to supplement genre repertoires for future writing. For instance, she suggests "if we ask students to write analytic essays in first-year composition, that genre will be available for them to draw on when they need to write a causal analysis in their history class, a report for work, or a letter to the editor" (p. 204–205) because writers draw on genres they know in response to perceived rhetorical exigence.

Devitt's theoretical explanations have been put to empirical research with complex and sometimes uneven results. For instance, Reiff and Bawarshi (2011) and Rounsaville et al. (2008) asked what types of prior genre knowledge student writers bring to college and how students draw on these resources in FYW. Based in surveys and discourse-based interviews, researchers found that students "have a wealth of genre knowledge; They wrote extensively in all three of the domains we supplied—school, work, and outside of school and work—although they wrote most extensively in school and outside of school and work; Their writing did not tend to cross domains, except for a select few genres, most of which represent correspondence-type writing" (Rounsaville et al., 2008, p. 105). Keller's (2013) work on reading echoes these results, as he found that students read richly and robustly across genre, media, platform, and domain *out of school*, and yet students' perceptions of what does and does not count as reading in school limits the transfer of skills, strategies, and broader reading practices. Findings from antecedent genre research also revealed that confidence and self-perception influenced what students would do with their wealth of prior genre knowledge when entering into new situations (Reiff & Bawarshi, 2011). Providing substantive additions to how teachers and researchers should view novice and expert writ-

ers, Reiff and Bawarshi (2011) found that boundary crossers (those who were more willing to accept novice status), could disassemble their prior knowledge and pull out what was useful for the present. In this way, boundary crossers “engaged in high-road transfer as they repurposed and reimagined their prior genre knowledge for use in new contexts” (p. 325). Alternatively, students who seemed to pull in old genres whole cloth showed increased confidence (acting more like experts); ironically, for these boundary guarders, their confidence hindered their flexibility when encountering new situations and led to limited high-road transfer. These sets of studies provide a baseline for future studies to consider how the amount and types of prior knowledge work in conjunction with students’ changing relationships to and attitudes about writing *in addition to* their growing genre repertoires.

Artemeva and Fox (2010), while not engaged in a study of FYW, have added to this conversation about prior genre knowledge, transfer, and introductory writing courses. Importantly, they find that “students’ awareness of genre differences and their ability to identify and report genre features did not enable them to produce a text in the requested genre” (p. 496–497). This has profound implications for popular approaches to genre teaching in FYW that center around genre awareness, which often focuses more on genre analysis and abstraction than on genre production. More specifically, the notion that genre production, the act of repeatedly writing in a genre, is required for students to recall and draw on (transfer) prior knowledge into new situations suggests the need to refine and focus on viable genre repertoires for first-year writers from a curricular perspective. Rather than include all genres encountered, Artemeva and Fox’s research suggests that all genres written are what become available for transfer. This substantiates Devitt’s (2007) suggestion that instructors and programs carefully consider what genres to require in FYW. Rounsaville’s (2012) research on genre transfer and uptake offers additional caveats for delimiting and naming an active genre repertoire through emphasis on how students encounter new writing situations vis-à-vis perceptual valences influenced by history, culture, ideology, language, and other factors shaping background, disposition, and personal perspective. She suggests that it’s not only a question of awareness and production, but also an issue of convergence between prior knowledge and present encounters that may determine which genres from a student’s repertoire transfer and why.

*Methods for Prompting and Making Use of Students' Prior Writing-Related Knowledge in FYW*

In addition to research on transfer and antecedent genre knowledge, scholarship also exists around ways transfer is prompted (in the wild) or can be prompted (by teachers or researchers) vis-à-vis prior knowledge. This work is closely supported by scholarship on analogical reasoning within cognitive psychology and situated learning theory, which shows that people's ability to transfer dramatically increased if they were prompted to use their prior knowledge through hints, the explicit use of comparative cases, and framing. In this section, we discuss a similar vein of research that advocates for prompting students' prior knowledge through staging "critical incidents" (Robertson et al., 2012), retrospective interviews, and active questioning and construction of the multivalent factors.

Building on studies of transfer and students' antecedent genre knowledge, Robertson et al. (2012) present constituent elements of what they call a theory of prior knowledge, which rests on the presupposition that "transfer in composition is an 'active, dynamic process.'" This research was based on interviews conducted and texts collected in a first-year teaching for transfer course. Robertson et al. (2012) are particularly interested in "how students *take up* the new knowledge related to old knowledge," with the caveat that much useful "old knowledge" may be missing from their history. Important to their theory are the following: students often enter into FYW with an absence of prior knowledge, students who do use prior knowledge often fall into one of two typologies of prior knowledge—the assemblage or the remix—and that "critical incidents" can prompt students to "let go of prior knowledge as they rethink what they have learned, revise their model and/or conception of writing, and write anew." (para. 1 in section on "Critical Incidents: Motivating New Conceptions and Practices of Composing"). These findings support a theory of how students "actively make use of prior knowledge and practice" that can be productively put in conversation with research in cognitive psychology on hints, comparative cases, heuristics, and framing.

Hassel and Giordano (2009) provide an important foundation for further research into the range of types of critical incidents that writing students encounter and wrestle with in diverse educational contexts. Their study of students at an open admissions community college provides additional insight into how underprepared writers

might encounter “critical incidents,” although Hassel and Giordano do not use that construct explicitly. The critical incident covered by Hassel and Giordano includes students transitioning from “developmental and non-degree preparatory courses” (p. 25) to a credit-bearing first-year writing class. Findings here show students struggling with rhetorical adaptability (their term), with some students even reverting to high school writing practices. As Hassel and Giordano note, historically excluded students face challenges beyond the rhetorical nature of writing transfer such as “differing levels of financial, emotional and psychological commitment” (p. 25) needed to successfully move into their college-level coursework. Further research into the range of critical incidents and types of transitions for community college populations is needed.

Drawing from memory studies, Jarratt et al. (2009) forward the construct of “pedagogical memory” as an external and deliberate means to prompt transfer and suggest that researchers interpret interviews about transfer as narrative retellings of prior writing experiences in which “the emotional charge around an event profoundly shapes (or impedes) its reconstruction” (p. 49). As they argued, “remembering is an act of participation, a placing of oneself in a story in a particular way” (p. 49). From this framework, they analyzed and provided implications of retrospective accounts of around one hundred student writers during their final years at university. Perhaps the most intriguing memory group were students who seemed to use the interview itself to make sense of their prior experiences and to “create pedagogical memories linking disparate college writing experiences” (p. 62) in real time. While each grouping provides important insights into how pedagogical memory works, they pull especially from this last group to suggest that “pedagogical memory work” (p. 66)—where students map, translate, and cultivate their own histories and linkages of writing—can bring forgotten memories to the fore. Active and guided remembering becomes a resource for the transfer of prior knowledge. Work by Jarratt et al. resonates strongly with research on framing from situated learning theory (see Chapter 2), defined as “a set of expectations an individual has about the situation in which she finds herself that affect what she notices and how she thinks to act” (Hammer et al., 2005, p. 98). Framing activates sets of resources much like the interviews did for Jarratt et al. Framing can also prompt intercontextual links, which can be primed when two contexts are framed as connected (Engle,

2006). As a valuable force within pedagogical memory work, frames are “meta-communicative signals that help establish what the participants are doing together in it, when and where they are doing it, and how each person is participating in it, thus creating a ‘frame’ in which their activities can be interpreted” (Engle, 2006 p. 456).

Hannah and Saily (2014), likewise, provide insight on how prior knowledge and experience may prompt transfer through their innovative study on tracking “shared language development in secondary to postsecondary transitions” (p. 120). Based on a survey of the writing language used by and taught to 112 ninth grade students at a predominantly Hispanic high school, Hannah and Saily concluded that “the potential boundary posed by language in the transition is not singular. That the boundary has multiple layers and to understand the potential impact of the boundary, it was vital to understand the dimensions of the layers [they] identified: genre, institutional, disciplinary, and personal/familial” (p. 132). This study highlights the complex intertwining of these layers to show the convergence of student’s linguistic ecologies and those of the institutions they traverse. Hannah and Saily’s work has strong affinity with research on transfer and second language writing that finds students write among languages, with transfer between languages defined as an interconnected and mutually informing phenomena rather than a process of “interference” (see Chapter 6, “Research on Transfer in Studies of Second Language Writing”). More specifically, Hannah and Saily make pedagogical recommendations based on students’ layered language history. One innovative assignment includes a class corpus of writing vocabulary in which students generate a list of writing-related terms and experiences and define what those mean as a group, with the goal of discourse negotiation.

Studies in this section highlight the range of mediating factors that can prompt transfer at the intersection of a current task and prior knowledge. Like genre knowledge (also a mediating force), critical incidents, transfer-focused interviews, and boundary translation are potential entry points for facilitating transfer and treating students’ prior knowledge from an assets-based framework. Students’ knowledge is culturally and historically embedded and distributed; the models presented here link transfer to students’ sociocultural writing world and prime them for consequential transitions (Beach, 1999). As Beach notes, “transitions are consequential when they are consciously reflect-

ed on, often struggled with, and the eventual outcome changes one's sense and social positioning" (p. 114). For instance, as Hannah and Saïdy argued, responding to students' language boundaries in ways that support students' transition requires an orientation to students as translators, "as decipherers of language that is teacher-centric" (p. 125). Like Jarratt et al. in their efforts to help students manage their memories in the service of transfer, Hannah and Saïdy see a critical role for teachers as helping students develop their boundary translation capacities. In all these prompting methods, boundaries are porous, and transfer is both on-going, active, and agentive. Such transitions are helpfully prompted by deliberate and systematic construction of transfer through methods aimed at drawing out memories, reconfiguring local and general knowledge, and orienting students toward the value of their discursive resources.

### *Reading, Transfer, and the Role of Prior Knowledge*

While less attention has been paid to the transfer of reading-related knowledge, reading transfer does have a role to play in first-year writing as it relates more broadly to a comprehensive literacy education that bundles literacy writing practices. A significant area of reading-related research centers on the role that students' prior knowledge or prior expectations play in how they encounter new and difficult reading assignments in first-year writing courses. A common finding is the need to provide students with culturally and content-familiar readings (Haas & Flower, 1988; Sweeney & McBride, 2015). This seems like a particularly important finding given that many of the teaching for transfer pedagogies suggest writing-related content as course readings (e.g., Downs & Wardle, 2007; Yancey et al., 2014). Thus, an important charge for educators can be to combine writing-related and culturally relevant readings for first-year writers to support prior knowledge in both reading and writing (as these are interlinked practices) by drawing from culturally and linguistically relevant writing studies literature.

While relating course readings to students' prior knowledge, expectations, and values is an effective strategy for transfer, students are also faced with managing today's complex and changing reading practices, which places additional pressure on transfer potential. For instance, Keller (2013) explores how reading practices respond to an age of literacy accumulation—with increasing build-up of literacies

past, present, and incoming for students to navigate—coupled with literacy acceleration, how quickly types of accumulations come and go and how many newer literacies “tend toward speed” (p. 7). He argues that questions of transfer are as important for reading as they are for writing and must consider the challenges of genre, media, and domain crossing. Like previous studies on prior writing knowledge, Keller likewise found that his study students have rich and complex reading worlds full of print and digital materials. Prior reading practices span the types of media, genres, and platforms now available in an intermixed digital/non-digital reading world. Yet, students’ assumptions about what should be read in school has kept them from bringing their wealth of prior practice into school domains. As he argues, students’ perceptions of and narratives about what literacy does, where it belongs, and who values it strongly influence the possibility of transfer.

In response to difficulties that students experience with transferring reading strategies, scholars suggest rhetorical genre awareness for reading (Gogan, 2013). Such reading pedagogies stress meta-awareness and metacognition (see also Carillo, 2015), especially as they relate to how academic values and expectations around reading may be out of step with the realities of the accumulation and speed of reading literacy. Critical reading practices (Keller, 2013) and rhetorical reading strategies can help students both connect to the texts they read as well as identify how and why rhetorical situations and genre expectations differ across classes of texts (Haas & Flower, 1988; Nowacek & James, 2017; Sweeney & McBride, 2015). In fact, many of the suggestions from scholarship on reading transfer align with stated best practices for writing transfer pedagogy. For instance, Sweeney and McBride’s finding that students identify a “textual mismatch” (p. 607) between their assigned readings and their compositions (for instance, when a student reads a *New Yorker* essay but is expected to write an analytical argument paper) could be helpfully addressed through Gogan’s emphasis on rhetorical genre awareness, which Gogan finds does help students transfer reading skills from FYW into the disciplines. Overall, there is great affinity between how we can teach for the transfer of both reading and writing. As these scholars note, research in both reading transfer on its own and how reading and writing transfer interrelate is a critical next step in transfer studies.

Much of the literature on prior knowledge discussed in this section highlights the complicated alignments and misalignments between

students' prior knowledge and activities in first-year writing. Despite the breadth and wealth of research, the role of out-of-school writing and reading, prior knowledge, and transfer is underexplored and can benefit greatly from a transdisciplinary approach. For instance, consideration of prior knowledge is a fundamental part of research on transfer in literacy studies (see Chapter 5), especially as it relates to the role of students' community and cultural knowledge and experience. Pedagogies from literacy studies center on bridging home, community, and school, and thus offer insights on how to build up classroom environments as equity infrastructures to leverage out-of-school and prior knowledge. Literacy studies scholarship could powerfully complement and extend the work presented in this section through its focus on culture, language, and social positioning and the elaboration of what "prior" may mean. For instance, while writing practices may be specific to a context, the ways in which prior knowledge animates practice can include work on students' multi and diverse out-of-school *contexts of activity* and their related ways of being, knowing, and doing, in addition to the text-based focus on types of writing-related knowledge that has been more common in first-year writing research. Readers interested in broadening their approach to prior knowledge in these ways should examine work presented in Chapter 5, "Transfer Implications from Sociocultural and Sociohistorical Literacy Studies."

#### TRANSFER AND THE ROLE OF DISPOSITIONS, ATTITUDES, AND EMOTIONS IN FYW

Research on the role that individual student and teacher dispositions, attitudes, and emotions have on transfer are a valuable complement to studies on prior knowledge as they deepen our understanding of how students encounter and react to new situations of transfer potential. Such studies reveal how individual students and teachers perceive, manage, and process their navigation of larger educational systems and can help educators extend knowledge on what helps or hinders transfer. In this section, we present studies of two types: first we overview scholarship that considers how attitudes and assumptions influence the possibilities of transfer from the perspective of both teachers and students. Second, we explore the role of disposition and emotions in transfer as "qualities that determine how individuals use and adapt their knowledge" (Driscoll & Wells, 2012, para. 1). Research described



in this section has kinship with work on dispositions in industrial and organizational psychology (see Chapter 3) and embodied cognition in situated cognition (see Chapter 2) and sports and medical education (see Chapter 4), all of which can extend writing studies' approaches to dispositions, attitudes, and emotions toward theories and methods as yet unexplored in our field.

Bergmann and Zepernick's (2007) foundational study of the impact of student attitudes and beliefs on transfer from FYW shows the extent to which "individual experience and peer culture" promote "students' conceptions about learning to write" (p. 126). Their study, based on focus group interviews of students who were several years out of their FYW course, treated student interview comments as "representations of students' own perceptions of how and where they learned to write and, most of all, what students believe themselves to be learning" (p. 126). Across four focus groups of 7–10 participants at multiple colleges within a single university, findings highlight how differently students perceived the value and goals of FYW as compared to their discipline-specific courses. Like Driscoll's (2011) study of students' perceptions about FYW's value in relation to later courses in the major, Bergmann and Zepernick found that students placed little value on FYW. Driscoll found that students had uncertain and even declining faith in FYW's potential for transferability. Bergmann and Zepernick (2007) found that students collectively perceived FYW as responsible for "personal and expressive writing" (p. 129) and not something that could be of much use in later classes. The reason for the perceived improbability that FYW could transfer rests in how it was compared to other courses. Discipline specific courses were seen as "part of the socialization into the disciplines" (p. 129), and thus students accepted and expected their rules and conventions to be governed by social and institutional factors.

Findings from these scholars are both troubling and reassuring. They are troubling insofar as they show that students don't see FYW as part of a larger disciplinary universe and thus subordinate that course to others; but findings are reassuring in that students can and do indicate that transfer is possible. Bergmann and Zepernick offer two solutions. First, they suggest instructors help students understand the disciplinarity of FYW—a suggestion echoed elsewhere by Downs and Wardle (2007) in their presentation of a writing about writing first-year writing course. Second, they propose a model to teach stu-

dents *how to learn to write* (p. 142). Teaching students how to learn to write “would help students learn how to recognize that they are making choices, and how to make those choices consciously, based on knowledge about the discourse community and rhetorical situation in which they are working” (Bergmann and Zepernick, 2007, p. 142). Their suggestion gives a shape to FYW that could hopefully serve as a counterpoint to perceptions about the course that seem to limit its transfer potential. For Driscoll (2011), a possible countervail includes explicit teaching for transfer. Research on prior knowledge and transfer reveals further the ways in which transfer potential is impacted by student attitudes. In their research on transfer and prior genre knowledge, Reiff and Bawarshi (2011) identified boundary crossers (students who were more willing to accept novice status and thus negotiate their prior knowledge more freely), and boundary guarders (students whose confidence hindered their flexibility when encountering new situations and led to stymied and less creative forms of transfer). Clearly, how students approached the course and their relationship to the course content helped determine the course’s value and potential as a site of learning and writing across the lifespan.

Teacher and scholar attitudes have also been cited as hindering potential transfer. For instance, Nelms and Dively (2007), in drawing from and comparing and contrasting survey and focus group data of first-year and upper-division writing teachers, found that teachers’ assumptions about student motivation and performance (whether founded or not) and their lack of understanding of the total curriculum likely contributed to teachers’ own motivation to teach for transfer. With today’s increasing numbers of vertical writing curricula across the United States, implications of these findings are especially vital: the “need to concentrate on sharing understandings about writing concepts, skills, and genres as well as course objectives and student attitudes toward writing” (p. 228) cannot be underestimated if we seek for transfer of writing to succeed across the curriculum. Kutney (2008), coming from the position that we ask too much of students, has argued writing studies scholars’ assumptions about expertise and first-year writers has created an “unattainable standard for transfer that guarantees the failure of first year composition courses” (p. 223). He asserts that assumptions about writing expertise, most notably that “students possess a meta-awareness of writing that they can use to direct their learning” (p. 223) are too burdensome for practical use. The

theoretical premise that scholars and educators expect too much from students, while provocative, has yet to be born out through empirical research. In fact, research such as Yancey et al.'s (2014) study of a teaching for transfer curriculum in first-year courses finds that students do excel in courses that teach for and prompt meta-awareness, transfer, and students' developing their own sophisticated theories of writing.

A promising research strand that asks how perceptions and assumptions affect transfer is disposition research. While the notion of dispositions can be tied back to a number of larger theoretical conversations from sociology, education, and psychology (see a fuller discussion of dispositions in Chapter 3 on "Transfer of Training and Knowledge Management"), two important ways that the construct of dispositions have been taken up in research on FYW comes from Bourdieu's work on disposition and habitus (Wardle, 2012) and Bronfenbrenner and Morris's work on dispositions within the Bioecological Model of Human Development (Driscoll & Wells, 2012). Wardle identifies two qualities that may help or hinder repurposing of writing-related knowledge (a construct she prefers to the term *transfer*): "problem-exploring dispositions," which encourage repurposing, and "answer-getting dispositions," which limit it. Wardle, drawing on Bourdieu, seeks to connect systems with individuals, responding, in part, to Driscoll and Wells' (2012) assertions that attention to "social contexts and curricula" have limited our understanding of individual writers. For Wardle, understanding the ways students' dispositions develop links directly to the social and institutional systems that they have been socialized in and through. Her work points to larger questions about elementary and secondary schooling and how these experiences produce orientations to writing.

Baird and Dilger (2017), who investigated the role of dispositions for writing transfer in internships, determined that "ease and ownership may be two critical dispositions affecting writing transfer" (p. 704). Each disposition is both generative and disruptive and relies on faculty mentoring and curricular infrastructure to aid students in successful transfer. For instance, in their case studies of Mitchell and Ford, both students confidently clung to their writing (ownership), which made it difficult to address complications or misalignments with prior knowledge. Such a disposition made any kind of adaptive or transformational types of transfer more challenging, although the inevitability

of such ownership differed for each case study student as Ford yielded to more negotiation between current task and prior knowledge while Mitchell “held onto the approaches to writing he learned in composition as long as possible; then he gave up and tried to give his teachers what they wanted” (704). These findings lend increased credence to Wardle’s (2012) argument that US educational systems set students up for unproductive and diminished dispositions for learning and adapting to change and challenges.

Driscoll and Wells (2012), synthesizing studies from two different universities, draw from Bronfenbrenner and Morris to define dispositions as “personal characteristics such as motivation and persistence” that interact with other bio-ecological features of an environment: processes, time, and context (part 1 in section on “Defining Dispositions”). Critically, dispositions refer not to “intellectual traits like knowledge, skills, or aptitude” but rather to how those are practiced (part 2 of section on “Defining Dispositions”). Within this formulation, dispositions are especially salient for transfer study because they “determine students’ sensitivity toward and willingness to engage in transfer” (part 3 of section on “Defining Dispositions”). In identifying four dispositions that may impact transfer—how students might value FYW or transfer itself; the extent to which students believe in their own capacities as writers and learners; where and with whom students attribute success or failure; and how disciplined students are in regulating their study and writing habits<sup>7</sup>—Driscoll and Wells further complicate transfer encounters, reminding researchers and teachers that external and internal factors, and their unique combinations, matter for students’ ability to transfer. As an interacting factor with dispositions, emotions also play a key role in students’ transfer of writing-related knowledge over time (Driscoll & Powell, 2016). Moreover, students’ writing is impacted by emotional dispositions, which Driscoll and Powell define as “how emotions are managed across situations,” which impacts transfer. Anger, boredom, frustration, or sadness, for example, especially in relation to tough or highly unfamiliar writing situations, are especially inhibitive. In response, these scholars suggest that educators work with students to notice and control their emotional responses in moments of writing frustration to both facili-

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7. These four dispositions might helpfully be linked to the review of work on motivation and perceived utility, self-efficacy, locus of control, and self-management in Chapter 3 on “Transfer of Training and Knowledge Management.”

tate emotion identification and prime them for expecting and cultivating transfer.

Research on dispositions, attitudes, and emotions has made substantial contributions to the field's understanding of transfer and FYW, especially around issues of motivation, persistence, resistance, and problem-solving. Within this growing body of research, transdisciplinary connections with industrial and organizational psychology are especially promising for purposes of refining and broadening the theoretical constructs associated with research on dispositions. In the transfer of training literature, additional areas of research such as general intelligence, the Big Five personality traits, and perceived utility (see Chapter 3) have yet to be pursued and can extend this important research area. For instance, the notion of "perceived utility," which we defined in Chapter 3 as "an individual's belief that performing a specific behavior will lead to a desired outcome" (Chiaburu & Lindsay, 2008, p. 200), is a useful addition to the perception and motivation research on how students view the value and viability of FYW to prepare them for future writing tasks. Using this construct, we can see that Bergmann and Zepernick's (2007) study participants did not perceive the utility (see the value) of their first-year course to help them write in their disciplines. Such findings, when connected to the industrial psychology research on dispositions, provides affirmations to writing studies research and attaches the field's scholarship to longer-standing lines of inquiry associated with dispositions. In the case of perceived utility (or lack of), Chiaburu and Lindsay (2008) found that perceived utility predicted the motivation to transfer. Is this the case for writing students? For instance, Reiff and Bawarshi (2011) suggested that students' self-confidence and assumptions of expertise were responsible for lack of genre transfer. Wardle (2012) has argued that FYW student's prior habitus within US testing regimes limits students' creative repurposing and thus their disposition toward transfer. How would research from industrial and organizational psychology inform these studies? Is perceived utility an additional dimension that we can include in our own analysis? Of course, the value of a construct like perceived utility is just one example of the rich connections between transfer, dispositions, and FYW that could come from such transdisciplinary collaboration. Other examples include further exploration of the multi-dimensionality of types of dispositions already present in FYW literature like self-efficacy, motivation, and locus of control

through linkages to long histories of more precise and elaborated definitions as well as extended theoretical connections beyond the more common exposure to Bourdieu and Bronfenbrenner. We encourage readers to return to our synthesis in Chapter 3 to explore further how to grow and complexify their understanding of writing-related dispositions and transfer.

An unusual connection, but one worth pursuing, would be how disposition, attitude, and emotion research in writing studies links to work on embodiment from both sports education and educational psychology. As discussed in our chapter on “Transfer in Sports, Medical, Aviation, and Military Training,” Light (2008) argued for an approach to transfer that includes a “holistic view of learning and cognition that extends beyond the mind as a separate entity to include the body and all its senses” (p. 23). Work on embodied cognition within educational psychology argues similarly to the embodied cognition thesis, which states that “Many features of cognition are embodied in that they are deeply dependent upon characteristics of the physical body of an agent, such that the agent’s beyond-the-brain body plays a significant causal role, or a physically constitutive role, in that agent’s cognitive processing” (Wilson & Foglia, 2017). Disposition and emotion research that foregrounds how histories of practice produce current actions and perceptions could expand those experiential histories to include the habituated development of mind-body-materiality connections in the development and sedimentation of students’ dispositions and emotions towards writing. Research on simulations and fidelity, then, might further help writing studies research address ways to either capitalize on or unlearn such connections through its emphasis on the fine-tuned, built environments that interlink cognition, action, and context. Readers interested in broadening their approach to dispositions in these ways should examine work presented in Chapter 4, “Transfer in Sports, Medical, Aviation, and Military Training.”

#### TRANSFER, DIGITAL COMPOSING, AND MULTIMODALITY IN FIRST-YEAR WRITING

Thus far in this chapter, we have presented work on writing-to-writing transfer: transfer from one mode (alphabetic text) to another similar mode (other genres or occasions of alphabetic text) as well as writing from non-digital to non-digital text and genre. Yet a growing body of

research suggests prevalence of transfer from alphabetic text to other modes (non-print based) and vice versa, which opens questions of transfer to include investigation of the “interactions between activity systems, semiotic resources, and media” (DePalma, 2015, p. 617). Semiotic resources are defined here as the available modes (i.e., aural, visual, gestural, linguistic, technological, material, spatial) that writers use to make meaning (DePalma, 2015, p. 637). Transfer and multimodality is an especially vital area because it engages students in their prominent vernacular and extracurricular literacies (which are often multimodal and digital) and attends to the increased presence and near ubiquity of digital composing in school, personal, and professional contexts. Thus, this area of research is critical for supporting students’ transfer of prior digital and multimodal composing knowledge into the first-year classroom as well as facilitating students’ use of multiple modes in developing writing/composing expertise via transfer across multi-media and literacy domains. In this section, we outline research and pedagogical suggestions that attend to Yancey’s 2004 call to (a) “think explicitly about what [students] might “transfer” from one medium to the next: what moves forward, what gets left out, what gets added—and what they have learned about composing in this transfer process [and (b)] consider how to transfer what [students] have learned in one site and how that could or could not transfer to another, be that site on campus or off” (p. 311) through deliberate expansion of writing beyond school walls and beyond traditional texts.

Fine-grained case studies into students’ composing practices across modes and literacy domains includes a broad consideration of semiotic resources and is often supported by students’ self-sponsored, out-of-school composing practices. Studies include transfer of digital composing between in- and out-of-school domains (Knutson, 2018; Rosinski, 2016), movement across digital and non-digital multimodal genres for writing assignments in school (DePalma & Alexander, 2015; DePalma, 2015; VanKooten, 2020), and impacts of ways of seeing, being, and writing in transfer amongst in- and out-of-school composing contexts (Rifenberg, 2020; Rifenburg & Forester, 2018; Roozen, 2008, 2009, 2010; Roozen & Erickson, 2017; Rounsaville, 2017). Each of these studies reveals the ways in which student writers already participate in acts of transfer in everyday meaning-making, even without explicit instruction. Moreover, due to the fine-grained chronicling of literacy practices through ethnographic methods, they

also present opportunities for visualizing the multiple connections and ways of making connections (practices involved in acts of transfer) that writers forge, or are inhibited from forging, across context and modes.

Multimodal, digital transfer is complex and involves the transformation of rhetorical, semiotic, and technological resources. Drawing from classroom data on students' multimodal and digital transfer, DePalma and Alexander (2015) emphasize the rhetorically, conceptually, compositionally, and technologically messy and changing process of print-to-digital, multimodal transfer. Moreover, they found that the experience of multimodal transfer for students moving from print-based knowledge for digital composing was uneven. As they note, drawing from print-based rhetorical knowledge "worked well for students when they perceived aspects of print-based and multi-modal composing as similar, but it did not work well when they perceived aspects of multimodal tasks as different from their print-based composing experiences" (p. 185). DePalma and Alexander (2015) go on to note that because of some dramatic rhetorical shifts in audience and process between these two modes, "students experienced frustration, anxiety, and feelings of failure" (p. 185). Thus, despite the apparent "naturalness" of such practices, when faced with new forms of multimodal transfer, students may struggle, especially in relation to multimodal audiences, which participants often experienced in direct opposition to academic audiences and as an "ill-defined mass" (p. 186). Students also struggled with the breadth of kinds and types of affordances in multimodal semiotic resources, especially when making complex rhetorical decisions related to audience and purpose. Rosinski (2016) also documents such challenges, especially the rhetorical dimensions of moving between digital, self-sponsored writing and in-school, text-based writing. She finds, through survey data and interviews, that study participants exhibited more rhetorical awareness and sensitivity in their self-sponsored digital composing than in their assigned academic writing, and that this rhetorical knowledge did not appear to transfer between domains. She concludes that the lack of authenticity (in audience and exigence, for example) in in-school settings is partially responsible for the lack of rhetorically oriented transfer. In turn, she offers several suggestions for how teachers can prompt this transfer. Teachers can guide students to "Examine their rhetorical knowledge/strategies in non-academic writing domains; Consider the rhetorical knowledge/strategies they use in their own self-sponsored



digital writing; and [r]eflect on these strategies, examine their value and effectiveness, and consider applying them in academic writing” (p. 267).

Importantly, students don’t merely transfer digital composing knowledge from discrete text to discrete text. Rather, they often work within digital ecosystems (Davis, 2017), which might include a learning management system (LMS), an online community, or other networked publics that involve substantial digital ecosystems. While all texts are part of an intertextual network (Witte, 1992), the linkages and avenues within digital ecosystems (through hyperlinking, for example) are both immediate and far-reaching, and thus define any starting point in relation to networks of community and expanded audience participation in ways that are not as salient for print texts. Thus, transfer across such “networked communities” presents special challenges for transfer (Davis, 2017). Imagine the rhetorical, semiotic, and technical conundrums experienced within one-to-one digital transfer and then place that within the multitudes of digital ecosystems. Because of the evolving and complexly interlinked nature of such linkages, Davis suggests that students must develop a resilience-type disposition and mindset when writing in digital ecosystems. Universities, too, can play a part in this longer-term instruction by presenting students with a range of digital tools throughout the curriculum (and extended to across the curriculum digital ecosystem) so that students get the consistent, authentic practice they need for acts of transfer within ill-defined online environments.

In addition to research on digital composing as multimodal transfer, scholars document transfer across non-digital multimodal realms. Such work identifies moments of multimodal composition and its related perceptual infrastructure by following writers’ practices across a range of literacy domains. For instance, Roozen and Erickson (2017), in their case study of Alexandra, who “acts with tables” across video games, a personal calendar, a variety of tables for making soundtracks and inventing fan novels, and solving puzzles, suggest that these multiple, accumulating, and synergistic practices involve the on-going re-tooling and remediation of inscriptional practices that likewise support her in-school writing development. Rifenburg (2020) has traced the role metacognitive strategies play in helping student athletes connect their athletic experiences with their FYW academic writing. Roynsavage (2017) found, through interview and document analysis,

that genre practices and ways of thinking in one student's subculture (his affiliation with maker-culture) constituted a lifeworld experience and provided a discursive and experiential background that yielded taken-for-granted ways of thinking, feeling, and doing in everyday life that supported or hindered transfer between multiple genres in FYW and beyond.

These studies demonstrate how transfer, especially when defined as adaptive, dynamic, transformative, and rhetorical (DePalma & Ringler, 2011), is always integrated into textual, multimodal, and embodied productions. The point, then, is for researchers to observe, document, and name empirically occurring features of such movement and develop pedagogically supportive methods for making transfer more explicit, more conscious, and more purposeful. Students' proclivity toward digital, multimodal, and multiliteracy transfer can be enhanced and supported by dedicated teaching methods to provide some control over these processes. Engaging in self-sponsored multimodal practices does not mean automatic transfer to school writing. Thus, in addition to methods of enhanced reflection on rhetorical processes (Rosinski, 2016), pedagogical suggestions that directly address multimodal-to-print and digital-to-print transfer are needed.

Romanticized notions that students can easily transfer their digital and multimodal composing processes, skills, and strategies should be replaced by systematic teaching practices that can include tracing (DePalma, 2015), semiotic mapping (DePalma & Alexander, 2015), and adaptive remediation (Alexander et al., 2016). These methods add to the growing literature that views transfer as a purposeful, dynamic, and powerful form of agency to transform knowledge across composing contexts and genres in ways that both suit and support writers' goals, identities, sets of knowledge, experiences, and expertise. Tracing (DePalma, 2015), for example, aids students in developing meta-awareness for multimodal transfer through prompting them to inventory their range of semiotic resources as well as trace and name the rhetorical moves of the semiotic resources provided by the texts and compositions they seek to craft. From these activities, "tracing provides a solid basis for decision making and functions as a heuristic for mining rhetorical possibilities" for transfer across media and modes (p. 635). Overall, each of these approaches emphasizes heuristics for adaptation and transformation of rhetorical and semiotic knowledge and also honors students' own self-sponsored literacies in the process.

## CURRICULAR RECOMMENDATIONS AND INNOVATIONS FOR TRANSFER IN FIRST-YEAR WRITING

Research into transfer and FYW most always has pedagogical implications. While some research yields particular strategies or stand-alone teaching methods, there are several curricular innovations that can be clustered together into more defined “approaches” for FYW. Standalone suggestions that can be incorporated widely include:

- emphasizing increased metacognition and meta-awareness of writing practices, processes, prior experiences, and writing constructs through reflection and portfolios (Keller, 2013; Reiff & Bawarshi, 2011; Rounsaville et al., 2008; Wardle, 2009);
- writing activities and assignments that facilitate students developing abstract schema and generalizations from many local and situated instances of writing (Beaufort, 2007);
- focusing students’ attention on the ways that dispositions, attitudes, and emotions toward writing may help or hinder their ability to both draw on prior knowledge and transfer current learning (Baird & Dilger, 2017; Bergmann & Zepernick, 2007; Driscoll, 2011; Driscoll & Wells, 2012; Driscoll & Powell, 2016);
- helping students identify and work with their prior knowledge for the purposes of identifying, applying, and transforming useful skills, strategies, habits of mind, and dispositions that support writing-related transfer (Hannah & Saidy, 2014; Keller, 2013; Reiff & Bawarshi, 2011, Robertson et al., 2012; Rounsaville et. al, 2008).
- attuning students to their range of semiotic resources (aural, visual, gestural, linguistic, technological) developed from self-sponsored composing and community participation and providing opportunities to connect and transform these resources across a range of media, modes, and texts through deliberate practices such as charting, inventorying, coordinating, and literacy linking (Alexander et al., 2016), tracing (DePalma, 2015), and semiotic mapping (DePalma & Alexander, 2015; van Kooten, 2020).

In addition to these recommendations, we have identified four teaching approaches. These include rhetorical genre awareness and genre approaches (Bawarshi, 2003; Bazerman, 1997; Beaufort, 2007, 2012;

Clark & Hernandez, 2011; Devitt, 2007; Devitt et al., 2004; Maimon, 1983); writing about writing (Bird et al., 2019; Downs & Wardle, 2007; Wardle, 2009); threshold concepts (Wardle & Adler-Kassner, 2019); and teaching for transfer (Yancey et al., 2014).

One long-standing approach for teaching towards transfer in FYW is a rhetorical genre and genre awareness approach. Such an approach uses genre analysis and genre production and is supported by theory from educational and cognitive psychology and rhetorical genre studies. This approach centers the interplay of local and general writing knowledge, the development and application of abstract schema through work with genre models and comparative examples, and explicit practice in applying genre heuristics to multiple new writing situations. A goal, as Devitt (2007) suggests, is explicit teaching about genres to facilitate strong genre awareness in first-year writers. The intent is to slow down automatic and unconscious genre transfer, which, like low-road transfer generally, “reflects the automatic triggering of well-practiced routines in circumstances where there is considerable perceptual similarity to the original learning context” (Perkins & Salomon, 1988, p. 25). To wrestle a prior genre from automatic (and perhaps ill-suited) use, Devitt emphasizes the critical role of genre awareness as training in the kind of slowing down and mindful abstraction required for high-road transfer. Thus, genre analysis, and the schemas that students can develop from this rigorous practice, become tools for entering new discourse communities through stages of identifying genres, asking how those genres work in terms of subject matter, rhetorical knowledge, discourse community knowledge, and writing process knowledge (Beaufort, 2007), and then engaging in and producing those genres with the flexibility of localized rhetorical situations in mind.

Beaufort (2007, 2012) has offered several iterations of a genre approach to FYW, with a retrospective culminating in her most refined thinking on the matter. In her 2012 “Retrospective,” Beaufort revisits some of her earlier pedagogical recommendations while continuing to emphasize core tenets for teaching for transfer in first-year writing, especially as they relate to genre and transfer. In her earlier work, and in *College Writing and Beyond* (2007) in particular, Beaufort stressed five knowledge domains that students should explore through a carefully scaffolded course sequence. In this review, Beaufort (2012) strengthens and refines her commitment to teaching genre awareness as an

integral practice in teaching “learners to frame specific problems and learnings into more abstract principles that can be applied to new situations” (Beaufort, 2007, p. 177). As she notes, “discourse community, genre, and rhetorical situation, [sic] are the kinds of ‘abstract principles’ that can be taught explicitly and may help writers to frame their knowledge in ways that aid transfer to new writing situations” (p. 178). This approach to transfer is informed by a commitment to (a) teaching abstractions that are applied to multiple writing situations, (b) continued application across multiple situations and contexts, and (c) emphasis on reflection of and awareness about that process.

Beaufort’s emphasis on genre is indebted to the work of Bawarshi (2003) and Devitt et al. (2004) who promote sustained and explicit analysis of multiple genres across multiple situations for the express purpose of teaching students how to recognize and respond to recurring rhetorical situations. In the textbook *Scenes of Writing: Strategies for Composing with Genres* (Devitt et al., 2004), for instance, students are guided through a systematic process of collection and analysis that includes collecting multiple genre samples (to show patterns of communication in relation to idiosyncratic features), identifying and describing the genre’s context and textual patterns, and analyzing the relationship between the form and function of those patterns. Such an approach merges an intensive study of local writing (through sustained genre analysis) with general schema development (through the abstraction and study of patterns in community genres). As Bawarshi (2003) describes, when genre pedagogy is central in FYW, it becomes a “course in rhetoric, a course that uses genres to teach students how to recognize and navigate discursive and ideological formations. We can do more to help our students write in and beyond the disciplines by teaching them how to position themselves rhetorically within genres so that they can more effectively meet (and potentially change) the desires and practices embedded there” (p. 169). A course based in genre can be a course in writing transfer and transformation. A course in genre is also potentially a course in galvanizing students’ vast discursive resources for transfer. As Bazerman (1997) argues, “genre is a tool for getting at the resources that students bring with them, the genres they carry from their educations and their experiences in society, and it is a tool for framing challenges that bring students into new domains that are as yet for them unexplored” (p. 24).

A genre awareness approach is capacious enough to benefit a variety of emphases in transfer pedagogy. For instance, Clark and Hernandez (2011) developed a discipline-oriented genre awareness curriculum to “help students make connections between the type of writing assigned in the Composition course—that is, academic argument—and the writing genres they encounter in other disciplines” (p. 65). Their course adopted many of the suggestions given across transfer-oriented writing pedagogy, but with an explicit target of transfer to other college disciplines. Thus, the central feature of their course was collection, comparison, analysis, and reflection on academic argument in specific disciplines with a focus on identifying how “writer, audience, text, and rhetorical situation interact with one another in constructing a genre” as well as on genre features (p. 69). In studying students’ response to this curriculum, they found that genre awareness (not explicit teaching of singular genres) may be an important threshold concept that opens pathways for transfer and is a core characteristic of writers who make significant gains in learning to write in unfamiliar situations.

Bawarshi’s admonition that the content of FYW *be writing* is also taken up in Downs and Wardle’s (2007) “Teaching about Writing, Righting Misconceptions,” which directly addresses the need for a comprehensive pedagogical model that centers transfer. Their approach—more typically called writing about writing—was built from the situated, sociocultural, and activity-based theoretical orientations to writing that Petraglia (1995) and Russell (1995) stressed. This approach teaches writing studies content while also engaging students in discourse community and socially situated writing activity. More specifically, writing about writing foregrounds disciplinary writing and research as a way to (a) provide a context-rich writing environment for students, (b) help students understand that writing is a legitimate object of inquiry and writing studies is a discipline in its own right, and (c) provide writing experts (writing teachers) the real opportunity to serve as teaching and reading experts for their students. As Downs and Wardle (2007) stress, “unlike pedagogies that are so detached from writing studies’ specialized knowledge as to deny it, the Intro pedagogy emerges from that knowledge and ethos” (p. 560). Reporting on two instances of this approach’s application across two institutions, Downs and Wardle (2007) present positive findings for how this course “teaches potentially transferable conceptions of the activity of writing rather than ‘basic’ writing skills that are in fact highly special-

ized and contextualized” (p. 578). These include an increased sense of self-awareness about the activity of writing and students’ increased ownership over their first-year experience. Findings also showed students’ heightened confidence and ability in reading difficult texts and an increased awareness of the nature of research writing as entering into and contributing to ongoing discipline-specific conversations.

*Next Steps: New Directions for/in Writing about Writing* (Bird et al., 2019) connects writing about writing with questions of diversity and equity (Grant, 2019; Rudd, 2019; Wilson et al., 2019), a needed and under-researched area. For instance, in their chapter on Latinx writing and writers, Wilson et al., (2019) focus on students at a public Hispanic-serving institution who were introduced to readings from within the field on the language and writing of minoritized writers, and especially minoritized Latinx writers, and then guided to engage with those readings through personal experience. Wilson et al. (2019) found that “WAW allows us to foreground what is generally ignored in our composition handbooks and in our classrooms: the problematic nature of a one-size-fits-all ‘standard’ of writing and of English” (p. 94). Moreover, the course led to an “increase in the students’ self-efficacy” and “their bi- and multiculturalism helped them to understand the readings” (p. 94). Grant (2019), in her study of a writing about writing approach for multilingual students, likewise stresses how her class “help[ed] lift students out of their linguistic dispossession” (p. 84). By connecting students with realistic research about writing and language, such courses counter dangerous literacy myths while also supporting students’ potential to transfer their knowledge and confidence elsewhere.

Teaching for transfer (TFT), similarly draws from research and theory in writing studies to center content from the field, with a specific emphasis on reflection, as students build their own theories of writing for future guidance. As Yancey et al. (2014) explain:

The study of transfer across contexts of writing that we share here is guided by these two questions: what difference does content in composition make in the transfer of writing knowledge and practice? and how can reflection as a systematic activity keyed to transfer support students’ continued writing development? (p. 33)

Drawing most strongly from Beaufort's (2007) emphasis on reflecting across courses and situations and her framework for writing expertise, Yancey et al. (2014) developed and implemented their TFT course with the aim of researching its transfer value as compared to two other courses (a themed cultural studies course and an expressivist-centered course) that they study simultaneously. TFT is designed to foreground writing as content and activity, with specific emphasis on "key terms" or "conceptual anchors" (p. 42) that frame students' approaches and reflections. Such anchors guide "specific, reiterative, reflective practice linked to course goals, which themselves take transfer of knowledge and practice as the first priority" (p. 42). Findings from this study are heartening, although more and extended studies are needed. Yancey and colleagues did indeed discover that the students in the TFT course demonstrated increased transfer of writing-related knowledge—in contrast to their study's counterparts. Most revealing is the role that composition content and composition terms (conceptual anchors) played in helping students think about how writing works across contexts. Students' personal theories of writing grew from systematic and persistent reflection across the big picture, as students were cued to think about and imagine applications for other domains of writing in writing-related terms.

A smaller grouping of studies—Johnson & Krase (2012), who studied transfer of argument skills; Jackson (2010), who studied analysis; and Graff (2010), who studied argument development across multiple genres—has looked at the transfer of specific skills from FYW to argue that teaching for transfer is crucial for encouraging it. While not a subset of the teaching for transfer curriculum, these studies do show that when instructors explicitly teach for and talk about developing theories about writing (in addition to teaching the skills themselves), students are inclined to transfer the instructor's chosen focus. Through these cases, we are beginning to understand the importance of writing studies expertise for instructors teaching and designing courses—as writing content, writing practice, and theories of how learning works are likely all necessary for developing a course or curriculum where the explicit goal is to facilitate writing-related transfer.



## CONCLUSION

As we discussed at the beginning of this chapter, the relationship between the possibility of transfer from FYW (or into FYW) had been met early on with skepticism. In *The End of Composition Studies*, Smit (2004) provoked the field when stating: “The question is how to construct a writing curriculum so that such instruction in transfer is commonplace, indeed a major feature of the curriculum” (p. 134). A growing tradition of transfer research in and around FYW is just now beginning to inform such a question; approaches like genre awareness, writing about writing, and teaching for transfer have integrated that research into curricula. These approaches would benefit from further examination, although early findings are positive. One goal now, while also continuing robust research inquiry into prior knowledge, dispositions, and the role of reading, is to push curricular research in a dialogical direction: continuing to move new empirical findings of best practices through pedagogies that are being further refined and sharpened, all the while understanding that a singular pedagogy and a singular writing course is not the panacea.

Beyond continued classroom research of the approaches just outlined, a central goal should be towards a transfer curriculum that centers students’ histories, languages, and identities in ways that fully integrate social and linguistic justice in the aims and methods of the course. As extensive research in transfer and L2 writing shows (see Chapter 6, “Research on Transfer and Studies of Second Language Writing”), multilingual and multidialectal students come to writing with holistic and complex language repertoires that are deeply tied to identity and prior experience. A closer and more deliberate connection to L2 transfer research helps center language in the writing classroom and promotes writing studies scholars working from more inclusive research findings. Literacy studies scholarship likewise forwards this goal and, we suggest, should become more integrated into how FYW scholars consider student background, student identities, and students’ right to bring their full, complex, and sometimes contradictory selves into acts of transfer (see Chapter 5, “Transfer Implications from Sociocultural and Sociohistorical Literacy Studies”).

The foundation for writing transfer in FYW is strong, and while initial turns to transfer may have rested on proving the value of FYW to students and to institutions, it’s clear from recent research that the

value of teaching for transfer is not simply instrumental and transactional. Of course, it matters that students will be able to use writing-related knowledge gained in FYW in other settings. But as we found in the literature, attention to transfer into and from FYW is also about value to self and community. This latter point is especially prominent in the most recent turns in transfer pedagogy that unite student agency, empowerment, and students' rich discursive resources with writing transfer. As the field broadens to consider *why* transfer matters for first-year writers—to include value to professions and academic settings, value to communities, and value to identities and experiences—we benefit from diversified sets of theory, methods, and rationales for transfer. All of these are enhanced through a transdisciplinary orientation to writing transfer.

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