

# FIVE WRITERS' PERCEPTIONS OF WRITING FUNCTIONS

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The problem of personality is becoming more and more urgent in the humanities and in everyday life. . . .Scholarship cannot afford to bypass the individual if it wants to grasp the real complexity of developmental activity. . . .

We must remember that all external influences enter the work through the mediation of personality. . . .The history of literature is a struggle between the inertia of literary structure and the forced interventions of personalities. (Mukarovsky 161)

This research explores one of the most fascinating issues in contemporary writing theory: how a writer's personality and culture affect what and how he or she writes. We all know there is more at stake than the cognitive, biological ability to communicate through symbols: society intersects with personality when meaning-making takes place. One look around the writing class reminds us of the input of diverse personalities, writing backgrounds, and goals on what our students write and how they write. Much more remains to be known about the mysterious, multifaceted influence of society and personality on the development and refinement of written texts.

This study examines the perceptions of one experienced and four inexperienced college writers regarding the functions of writing in academic settings, wherein the term function refers to the social and personal value of language.

Analyzing these students' perceptions revealed that they possess a wealth of insights into the social and personal factors which influence what they write, how they write, and what their writing means to them. These five students express interesting

perceptions about the social and personal factors which influence what and how they write. An examination of the thirteen functions reveals that when it comes to motivating student writers, all writing functions are not created equal. Some functions are perceived to elicit positive, motivating attitudes and result in better writing, while other functions appear to discourage writers from producing quality writing. Moreover, an understanding of the writing functions perceived by these students offers insights into contextual factors which encourage students to explore, shape, and communicate meaning. For example, whether or not the force behind the creation of discourse is internally or externally motivated is found to profoundly influence students' composing processes and students' motivation. Socially imposed writing functions are perceived to focus on editing at the expense of exploration and discovery, while internally motivated discourse promotes exploration and discovery at the expense of editing. The students identify a number of factors — such as self-assigned versus teacher-assigned writing tasks — which motivate them to write.

This study posits several developmental hypotheses. A writer's development can be characterized by evaluating the dominance of the kinds of functions he or she perceives. The number and kind of functions perceived seem to be related to development in very subtle but significant ways. Presently, I shall clarify how these functions were defined and how this model of discourse can inform pedagogy and current research.

## **METHOD**

Over the course of one academic year, I conducted ten non-directive, hour-long interviews with four inexperienced college writers and one experienced college writer. I recruited the five students who agreed to participate in the interviews from three introductory composition courses. Each of these five students was told that I was writing an essay about what students thought about writing. I was emphatic about the point that no one knew what writing was like for them as well as they did. In short, they were the experts; I was the learner.

The five students selected to participate were enrolled in introductory college composition courses which I did not teach and which were offered by a large northeastern state university undergraduate learning center. These students were selected ac-

ording to their willingness to participate and their responsiveness and articulateness. Four of these writers are considered “inexperienced” because they were placed in learning center courses when they scored poorly on a holistically scored English Placement Exam. The fifth writer is considered “experienced” because he had enrolled in a Learning Center 212 course by his own choice and was exempted from English 101, after scoring well on the same English Department sponsored Placement Exam. Finally, this fifth writer is in his senior year, whereas the other four writers are all freshmen.

I asked permission of each of the students at the start of each interview to tape and transcribe our discussion and promised full anonymity. As a consequence, the names of the students used in this study are fictitious.

All five interviews were carried out in as non-directive a fashion as possible. My initial question for each of the five students was: “How do you go about writing a paper?” This question was intentionally open-ended, because I did not want to lead the students’ responses. Following this, I sought clarification of what the students said. In short, the intrinsic interest of the research aims was not revealed. According to the linguist Madeline Mathiot, this process has two significant advantages: 1) By not controlling the time or topics discussed in the interview, I prevented the students from guessing my exact intentions. In effect, I was not asking leading questions, providing them with potential answers, directing their course of response. In this way, it was the students themselves making the meaning, rather than my attributing meaning to what the students said. 2) By not controlling the interview, I was able to obtain information, otherwise unobtainable, about the students’ opinions, perceptions, and feelings.

## **WRITING FUNCTIONS**

I inferred the writing functions by analyzing the students’ perceptions of the ways they expect their language to affect society and their personal lives. I was especially curious about the way in which the students’ past writing experiences and composing strategies were perceived to relate to social expectations, personal needs and values.

It is important that this analysis is distinguished from an analysis of specific discourse purposes and modes of discourse. Presently,

the term "writing function" is not essentially concerned with discrete, particular writing texts, nor is this term used in the same way in which other language theorists have employed the term, including, for example, Britton *et. al.*, or Applebee, or Odell and Goswami or Florio and Clark.<sup>1</sup>

## **DISCUSSION**

When inferring and defining functions, I found it useful to identify corresponding attitudes, rewards, behaviors, and links with the text attributes. The attitude attributes concern the students' opinion of the social and/or personal value of each function. In turn, the reward attributes address the achievements the students expect from particular functions. The behavior attributes involve the actions each function is said to cause. And the link with the text attributes concern ways these students feel perceptions of writing functions influence particular discourse texts. Thus, in the ensuing review, these four attributes will be considered each time a function is defined.

Moreover, comparing the corresponding attributes of the writing functions allowed me to differentiate functions from each other. In turn, this process led to a very interesting finding: all but two of the thirteen writing functions could be separated into three primary categories. For reasons outlined below, I have labeled these categories the socialized realm, the individualized realm, and the integrated realm.

Presently, I shall review these three realms of discourse and thirteen discovered functions.

### **A) THE SOCIALIZED REALM**

The responsive, evaluative and aggressive functions can be separated from the other discovered functions because they share two attributes in common. First these functions all represent external, social control over the students' composing processes and ideas. Writing playing the roles of these functions is externally motivated; the urge to communicate is extrinsic, not intrinsic. Second, these functions affect these writers' composing strategies similarly: they each focus on editing at the expense of exploration and discovery.

Function #1: Responsive (Victor, Ann, Frank, Barbara, Bart)<sup>2</sup>

Out of all thirteen functions, only one was suggested by all five writers: the responsive function. This role of language is defined as an overdependence on external sources. Students disown and relinquish responsibility for writing which plays a responsive function. Teachers and people in positions of authority over the writer are in control of the selection of a topic, the steps in composing (freewriting, drafting, and editing) and evaluation. The responsibility for organizing and developing ideas also lies with the teacher, rather than with the student. In the following, Barbara provides a succinct description of this phenomenon:<sup>3</sup>

J: Does your teacher influence how you write?

B: I think you should write for the teacher and not for yourself. When I write for myself the teacher doesn't like it so I write what she wants me to write. Like last semester, I found out when she taught she liked certain things, so I wrote for her and got a better grade.

J: That's interesting. Have you always done that?

B: Write for the teacher? Yeah.

A corresponding attitude appears to be one of deficiency and fear. Barbara, Victor, and Frank explain that they feel extremely deficient as writers and avoid content level courses which demand writing. Out of all five writers only Bart, the experienced writer, ascribes a positive value to the responsive function. Bart explains that he believes writing in the real world demands the ability to write on topics which are not particularly interesting, self-assigned or explorative:

B: It seems hard for me to just keep drilling and drilling, this is the way it should be, but that's kind of why I'm taking this course, to get a better background in that, because I need that for law school, that type of writing.

J: What type of writing?

B: More business type, it wouldn't be writing for enjoyment. It would be business type goals, you know, um, means-to-meet-the-end type goals.

The reward which the other writers link with this writing function is rather straightforward: academic survival. Clearly, this reward

is far more limited than Bart's long-range view. Finally, the response function shares two links with discourse texts. First, writing which plays this role is said frequently to be teacher-assigned. Second, it is typified by an overdependence on the external, elite reader. For example, Victor explains that if it were not for school, he would never write. But never, even in the exceptional case when he has been responsible for the selection of a topic, does Victor "take it past the point that anyone else is gonna read it but the teacher."

Barbara introduces an additional activity and link with the text: she plagiarizes teacher-assigned, responsive writing. Barbara suggests the means employed to achieve the end are not terribly important:

B: Sometimes I copied from the book. It wasn't hard to do. Just put in a lot of footnotes. Change it around a little. That's all. They didn't bother to check.

J: They didn't bother to check what?

B: The sources. See, all you need to do is copy out of the book.

J: Do you copy out of the book like this often?

B: Yeah, most of the time.

#### Function #2: Evaluative (Ann & Barbara)

A second writing function, suggested by Ann and Barbara, is that of evaluation. According to Ann, this role is concerned with writing completed for the university undergraduate learning center. Ann does not know the value of this writing assignment, beyond the fact that at the beginning and the end of each semester she will be asked to write a pre-and-post test which will not influence her grade or her placement in subsequent English Composition courses. Moreover, the attitude of this evaluative function appears to be one of general acceptance. Although she dislikes the writing topics, and wishes she did not have to do them, Ann explains that she perceives these writing tasks to be a bureaucratic necessity.

#### Function #3: Aggressive (Bart)

Another function directly related to this response function is that of aggression. This function, according to Bart's perception,

is associated with persuasive modes of discourse. To Bart, the attitude linked with this function is that of aggressiveness and close-mindedness. The author, prior to writing, decides on an idea and then rams it down the reader's throat — an antagonistic reader who is not especially interested in the author's purpose. In other words, the parts of his subject are not named and integrated into the whole during his involvement in the composing situation. Rather, prior to involvement in the composing situation, the whole is claimed to be known. The corresponding reward of this function is the completion of long term goals. Bart believes that mastery of the aggressive function will provide him with the skills necessary to be a successful lawyer.

#### CONCLUSION — SOCIALIZED REALM

Clearly, the responsive, evaluative and aggressive functions are perceived to alienate rather than motivate these writers from doing their best work. However, presently and throughout this discussion, it is important to recognize that because this study is not concerned with specific texts, it is impossible to determine the accuracy of these perceptions in regard to written products. But it certainly makes sense that these functions are unlikely to result in the students' best work.

#### B) THE INDIVIDUALIZED REALM

In contrast to the functions of the socialized realm, the two functions of the individualized realm — the explorative and therapeutic functions — are associated with internal, rather than external control. In addition, these functions encourage exploration and discovery. While they are perceived to result in highly motivated writing, they also tend to dissuade editing and refinement. Texts which result when these two functions are dominant are perceived to be unstructured, often guided by images, and written for the self-as-audience.

#### Function #4: Therapeutic (Frank)

The therapeutic function is discovered by examining Frank's most powerful, positive writing experience: that is, an essay he wrote regarding his parents' divorce. Frank explains that writing

about the divorce brought him out of the pain and helped him in solving his problems:

J: Did writing help?

F: Yeah, it helped overcome. It must have been some kind of mental block or something, because I wasn't doing anything. I mean it was like I was blocked off from college. There's no motivation involved. It was like, I was relieved. I got it all out too.

J: Did you get it all out in the paper? Or was it something else? Was it just time, or?

F: I got it in the paper. I guess my mind kept on going, thinking. It was driving, driving and thinking, tell me what went wrong. . . about what I was doing wrong. What was happening in life. What was going right or wrong.

J: That was in the paper?

F: Yeah.

J: And after that, it felt better?

F: Yes.

The therapeutic function is associated with great motivation to explore a personal problem: "It was something I wanted to write." The behavioral activity of this function, then, is intense involvement in the writing task itself. Moreover, as demonstrated in the above and the following — when Frank explains he did not, and could not, consider his teacher as a potential audience for this personal piece — the therapeutic function is linked with the self as audience.

J: What would have happened if you had thought about your teacher when you wrote that?

F: I wouldn't have. I couldn't think about it. I was too emotionally involved, I mean, I was having problems.

This function also suggests that the writer does not pause during composing to reflect on the most effective organizational strategies: "I was writing and writing everything that came to my mind." The corresponding reward of the therapeutic function, then, as demonstrated in Frank's comments, is that of problem-solving; essentially, the therapeutic function, according to Frank, is to explore and alleviate a personal problem.



#### Function #5: Explorative (Victor, Ann, Frank, Bart)

The explorative function, considered by four writers in this study, is characterized by an attitude of enjoyment, enthusiasm, responsibility, and commitment. A corresponding behavior is self-disclosure. The exploration and discovery of self and self's experience is a predominant activity. In turn, the reward for this enthusiasm and committed exploration of self and self's experiences and thoughts is discovery. Subsequently, according to these writers, language which plays an explorative function teaches a writer ideas and feelings which he or she otherwise would not have had.

Quite a few links with the texts are associated with this role of language. For example, Victor explains that the enthusiastic attitude occurs when he has "had the advantage to pick a topic. . . If I chose my own topic, it really makes me be more me."

In large part, Ann concurs with Victor's perceptions, as demonstrated in the following:

I like it (a particular, teacher-assigned topic that Ann considers broad) because the way I said cuz it turns out. It pulls out what you got in you. So I'm not really looking at it that way in the sense of the people now. I'm just going through me, what do I know? What do I think?

Clearly, Ann enjoys the activity of thinking and the reward of surprising herself and appreciating her thoughts. Moreover, in the following, Ann suggests the explorative function can be associated with a broad, teacher-assigned topic, as well as to surprisingly good writing:

A: Like they might give a topic like the one we're doing now on the future world outlook. Okay, that topic is very broad. It can go either way. There's a lot you can talk about. It's a loaded paper. I like that (emphasis by Ann, indicated by tone of voice) cuz it gets the mind thinking. . . other than sterile, frozen in one area. This one is expanding and I like papers like that.

J: So it really makes you think?

A: Yeah! It brings out what you didn't think you had. It brings it up, and usually I come up with some pretty good stuff that I didn't know I had.

## CONCLUSION — INDIVIDUALIZED REALM

In contrast to the functions of the socialized realm, these two writing functions clearly motivate writers to write. However, like the socialized realm functions, these functions are also unlikely to result in the writer's best work, given the great self-absorption and lack of audience awareness characterizing them.

The extreme importance of these two functions of language to motivation and explorative thinking, expressed by all of the writers with the exception of Barbara, possibly lends credence to Britton et. al's and Emig's belief that all writing emanates from a self-expressive impulse. These results remind me of Vygotsky's hypothesis, so aptly described in *Thought and Language*: the individual is the root of meaning.

### C) THE INTEGRATED REALM

The following six writing functions comprise the integrated realm: analytical, informative, internalized, overcompensatory, moral, impressive. The term "integrated" has been selected because these functions suggest an integration of the individualized realm's impulse for self-expression and discovery with the socialized realm's impulse for communicating to audiences other than the self via shared symbols.

#### Function #6: Analytical (Bart)

Only Bart, the experienced writer, perceives a writing function which is best called analytical. He explains that he is motivated by an internal impulse to define and explore meaning and by a desire to communicate this meaning to a broad audience. In turn, this broad audience appears to be sympathetic and seeking knowledge. The attitude of this function appears to be "resistance to closure"—that is, being in a state of continual questioning, rather than closing one's mind and forming a simplistic conclusion. The corresponding reward appears to be one of joy and surprise, as new thoughts become integrated. The link this function shares with discourse situations, as illustrated by the following, appears to be writing which is both interesting and new to a reader.

B: In an analytical paper, you can analyze both sides of a story. . .take some viewpoints from one side, and then from

this side and just “v” it down to a summary. You can take points from everybody.

#### Function #7: Informative (Ann & Frank)

Ann suggests the informative function when she explains that language is sometimes utilized to demonstrate mastery over knowledge. Writing playing an informative function is concerned with material that is to be communicated to someone outside the self; it is not new material to the individual writer. Thus, the behavioral activity associated with this function is the review of known material. Moreover, the corresponding attitude appears to be one of recognizing the value of one’s thoughts and feelings and desire to disseminate the significant information perceived.

Anytime I write, I’m trying to inform somebody. The general audience, whoever picks it up and reads it. Cuz I’m mainly I’m trying to inform them.

Frank also expresses similar perceptions when he discusses his desire to inform an audience of material which he knows but which the audience is unfamiliar with. Again, this function appears to be characterized by an attitude of “being in the know,” a behavior of “the dissemination of knowledge” and the reward of “instructing and communicating with an externalized other.”

#### Function #8: Internalized (Victor)

Writing exhibits an internalized function when communication with an external audience is a primary objective. As the following demonstrates, one reward for writing which plays an internalized function is achievement, and this achievement occurs because of direct conscious interplay between Victor and a perceived audience external to the text:

V: The reader’s important. What good is a piece without a reader? Right?

J: Does every piece have to have a reader?

V: What good is it if it don’t? What will. What achievement has it accomplished if nobody reads it?

Commitment to the self, rather than a simple response to an external authority figure, seems to be an integral aspect of the inter-

nalized function, as perceived by Victor. Also, Victor explains that such writing is generally self-assigned, or, at the very least, committed (since commitment can certainly occur in response to a teacher-assigned topic, provided the task is related to Victor's interest and writing background).

I'd want to express ideas that I probably had had. Being as an individual, my conversation is very limited. I didn't know how to say this, but I don't have many people I can sit down and converse with on things that I normally think about, things that could be discussed. Things that I should discuss and things that need to be discussed, instead of having little conferences. "Hi Joe. . .Hi Vinny". It's all it ever is. It's all it ever will be. So I think what leads me up to something to write about what I feel I already know about is because I never ever had a chance to discuss it.

The internalized function, then, is characterized by an interaction between the writer and an external audience; the motivating reward is that of achievement, when successful communication has taken place. In addition, the impulse to create the discourse is internally motivated, rather than externally motivated.

#### Function #9: Overcompensatory (Ann)

The overcompensatory function appears to be singular to Ann. Essentially, this function refers to Ann's preference for writing her thoughts and feelings rather than speaking them. The attitude evidenced in this function appears to be a preference for written over oral communication. Ann explains that if she had her way she would rarely talk, but would write often. She suggests the corresponding activity of this function is intense concentration, and the reward is effective communication:

It's there (ideas Ann didn't know she had). So that's why I like to write. I really don't like to talk. I like to sit, observe, and to write."

#### Function #10: Moral (Bart)

This role of language is suggested when Bart refers to fiction. He explores the importance of endeavoring to reach a broad audience with a moral lesson formed in a relatively unique fashion:

“Well I think a fairy tale could ah. . . I think you could learn something from it anyway, I mean, there’s lots of moral lessons, just, you know, tripy stories.” Bart explains that he would like to write a funny story which teaches a moral lesson, and he suggests a corresponding attitude: “. . . You have to be ah. . . semi-serious about what you’re writing about.”

#### Function #11: Impressive (Frank)

The impressive function is defined by the importance Frank attributes to impressing teachers and peers with his writing skills:

J: It’s pretty important to you to become a better writer?

F: From a college standpoint, yes, because you have to be a good writer in college because there’s just gonna be situations that you have to write something to impress somebody.

Naturally, excellent writing skills are rewarded with academic survival. Thus, at first glance this function may seem to be identical with the reward associated with the response function — academic survival. Yet, though sharing a similar reward, the impressive function is not specifically linked with the excessive dependency on the teacher behavior or the attitude of alienation, deficiency, and fear. Rather, although this function is linked with the teachers and peers as evaluators, this relationship is perceived in a far more sympathetic vein. Moreover, delivering information to the teacher follows the exploration of material significant to the student’s interests and desires. Thus, the behavior of the impressive function is that of greater self-involvement; the attitude is taking pride in what one writes:

F: I wanted to impress my reader, my teacher. . . I wanted to impress my teacher by doing a good paper. But if it was somebody else, I probably would go right through it with no caution.

#### CONCLUSION — INTEGRATED REALM

The intellectually excited, personally committed aspects of these six writing functions are certainly noteworthy. These functions successfully bridge the best elements of the functions of both the individualized and internalized realms. Subsequently, it appears

likely to me that these writing functions are most likely to result in these writers' best work.

#### D) RENEGADE FUNCTIONS

Two functions — the function of personal power and the creative function — elude categorization in the above realms because their component attributes suggest a coming together and transformation of all of the attributes of the socialized, integrated, and individualized realms. These functions exude the creative will to extend beyond previous personal experience and social expectations.

##### Function #12: Personal Power (Bart)

Bart explains that when this role of language is in operation his interests guide what is typically an intense, thought provoking composing process. The attitude of this function is best described as self-acceptance; Bart is in control of his actions. The ensuing activities are experimental and playful, yet always representing powerful control over the construction of the verbal construct. And the activity of this function is achieved by controlling the ideas and the characters Bart creates to get his point across. The reward, similar to the cathartic release of the therapeutic function, is the release of feeling through characters and ideas he presents in his writing. Moreover, Bart suggests that the texts he produces when he is imbued with the spirit of personal power represent his precise intentions. These attributes are addressed in the following:

B: Be in touch with what I was writing, but have the power, be in total control of all the characters, do what I wanted. Have the power to do what I want to the characters but still stay in the story, have my feelings come out through the characters, like almost be a character as the author being a character.

Another significant attitude of this function appears to be the recognition of the complexity of human personality. Essentially, this attitude enters discourse situations when Bart recognizes he is a multi-dimensional human being. Bart explains that he perceives parts of his personality and uses these perceptions to build a character other than himself:

B: I take bits and pieces from the people I deal with to the people I see around and use pieces of myself to try and build a character that I think is a good character sketch.

### Function #13: Creative (Bart)

When the activity of the composing process is inductive, explorative, and imagistic, then what may best be called the creative function is in operation. The corresponding reward from this function appears to be pleasure gained via the process of explorative thinking. In terms of a pleasure-seeking activity, then, the creative function is similar to the explorative function; however, this creative function also incorporates the opinions of imagined broad audiences. In short, the creative function, as it appears to Bart, is also guided by the concerns of society. The corresponding activity for the creative function is one of self-involvement and self-discovery: "when I feel I'm creative I feel I can put more of myself in it." Obviously, this activity is also similar to the activity of the explorative function. But a different and additional activity of the creative function is that of considering and perceiving other people's opinions.

Another behavior associated with this role of language is the perception of images. Essentially, this activity influences the creation of the text in that Bart's goal becomes to transfer imagistic thought into a verbal construct:

B: I think it's like an art. It's like taking a paint brush and forming a picture, and that's when I like to write. If I can't do that, it's hard for me. Like you know a black and white piece of paper with words on it. There's not much of a picture. It's just telling somebody why they should do this, but when I write a fairy tale or something creative. I think I can form a picture with words.

### RENEGADE FUNCTIONS — CONCLUSION

I believe the finding that only Bart perceives these renegade writing functions deserves serious consideration for two reasons. First, both of these roles of writing address the personal power involved in mastering language. Second, these functions seem especially important to creative thought. These functions exude the creative will to extend beyond previous personal experience

and social expectations. Moreover, it is certainly interesting to note that the attributes of these functions support a traditional esthetic axiom: rebel against the familiar.<sup>4</sup>

## **FUNCTIONS AND DEVELOPMENTAL ASSUMPTIONS**

The developmental notions of these student writers are also noteworthy. The number of functions perceived seems to be related to development in very subtle but significant ways. For example, Bart perceives more functions than any of the other writers. In contrast, as we have seen, Barbara's perceptions are limited to one function: the responsive function. This seems to offer support for the notion that perceiving writing functions is important to becoming a better writer. It certainly would be fascinating to discover whether each writer's development can be characterized by evaluating the dominance of the three realms in their expressed perceptions. Moreover, I believe it would be interesting to discover whether simply perceiving a wide array of functions will eventually allow the four inexperienced college writers in this study to perceive the functions of the renegade realm which Bart considers.

Also the relationship between development and perceived writing functions suggests several additional questions: is it developmentally disabling to be dominated by perceptions of a limited number of functions? Barbara's obsession with the responsive function may explain the dysfunctioning of her composing strategies or explain her refusal to assume responsibility for her work, her lack of desire to become personally involved in her work, her antagonistic relationships with teachers.

Are certain functions especially critical to development? Why does only Bart, the experienced writer in this study, recognize writing functions which illustrate writing is power? What personal and social experiences have encouraged Bart to recognize the power involved in mastery of language?

Furthermore, if the assumption that the integrated realm represents the joining of socialized and individualized impulses is correct, then it makes sense that more developed writers should have broader, more fully developed perceptions of integrated functions. In turn, then, writing instructors possibly should be concerned with ways of introducing a variety of writing functions.

Other significant questions remain. For example, can writing teachers reasonably be expected to observe and confront the



various personalities exhibited by students in their classes? Are certain personalities likely to be dominated by certain writing functions? More research analyzing whether development is proportional to the number of functions perceived is necessary; it seems equally significant to discover whether an increased awareness of functions leads to an increase in the number of composing strategies.

Clearly, social and personal issues substantially influence how students write, what they write and what their writing means to them. A greater understanding of the relationship between writing functions is necessary in order to answer the following questions: Which functions are most significant for educators to consider when planning writing courses? Which writing functions contribute most to development? How significant are perceptions, or conscious awareness of these perceptions, of the personal and social value of language to the development of individual discourse texts and to writing development?

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## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>My position regarding the meaning and the use of the term "function," as well as my epistemological position regarding the ways in which the functions of language are studied, has in large part been defined, or at least extremely influenced by, the writings of Mathiot and Garvin. Essentially, Mathiot and Garvin posit the need to examine language use from a socio-cultural context. To this level of analysis, aided by the work of Mukarovsky, Moffett in *Teaching in the Universe of Discourse*, and Emig in *The Composing Processes of Twelfth Graders*, I have recognized the need to also evaluate language from a personal context.

<sup>2</sup>I have listed in parenthesis, following the introduction of each function, the names of the students who suggested the functions.

<sup>3</sup>To promote readability, I have taken the liberty of editing redundant statements, stuttering and mechanical errors from the excerpts of the interviews with student writers.

<sup>4</sup>Numerous scholars — such as Frye in *The Educated Imagination*, Barthes in *The Pleasure of the Text*, and Shahn in *The Shape of Content* — have argued that creative writers must master all that society has to teach regarding symbol forming, internalize this instruction, employ this instruction to express meaning in a personally meaningful fashion, and then reject former linguistic expectations.

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