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Anthony Green

Assessing Writing

What is Writing?

A (new) technology

A set of socially contextualised practices: why do people write?

Highly variable both in form and purpose

In comparison with speech, more...

Permanent

Planned

Distant

Orthographic

Complex

Formal

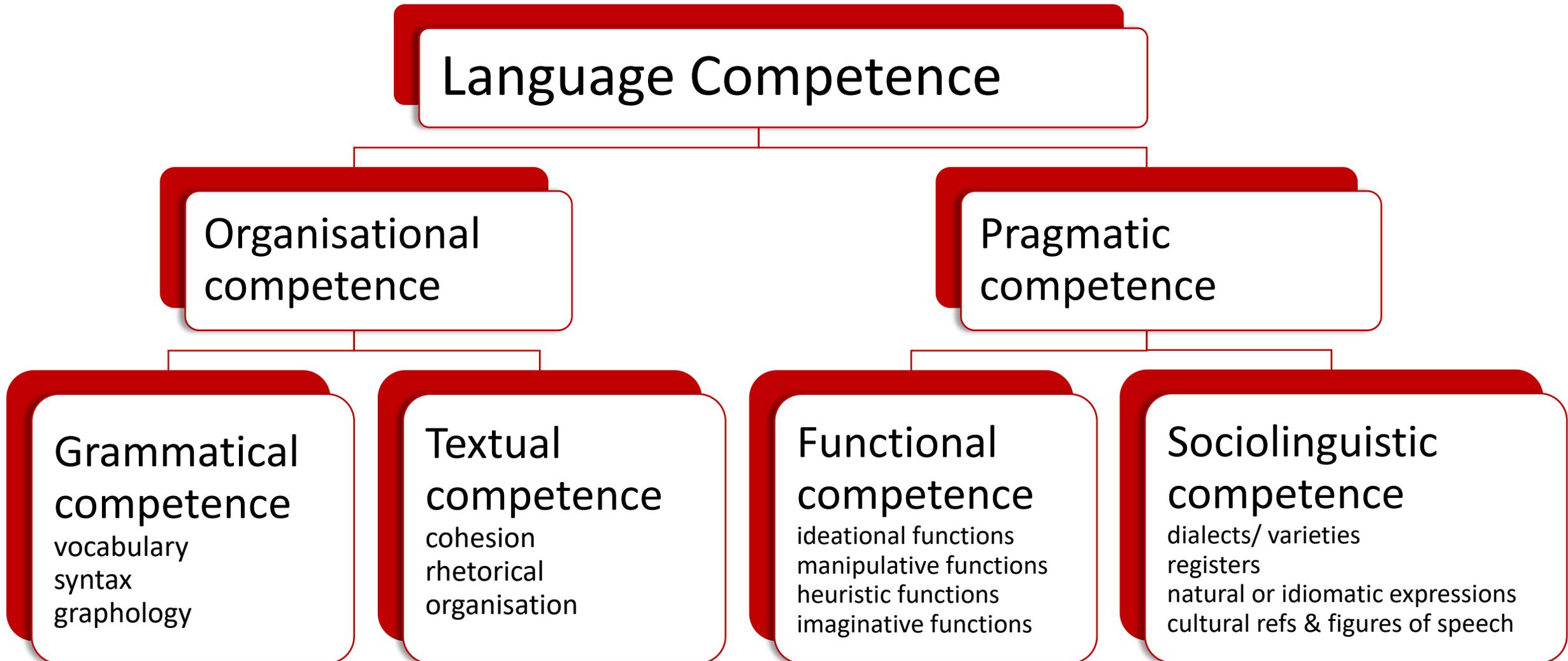
Lexically dense

Writing Processes

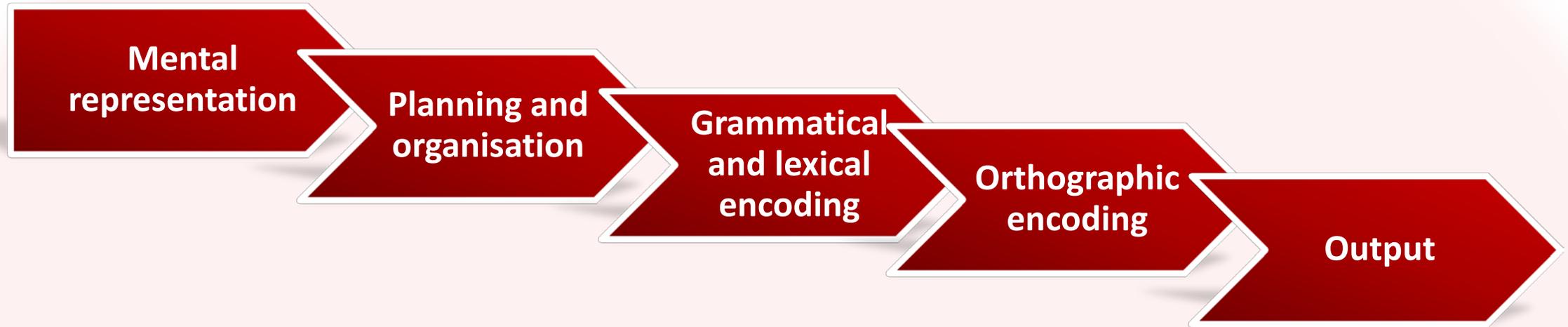
Cognitive dimension

- The knowledge factor
 - multiple competencies (Bachman and Palmer 2010)
- Processing factor
 - established procedures enable fluent performance with online planning reduced to acceptable amounts and timing

Bachman & Palmer Model



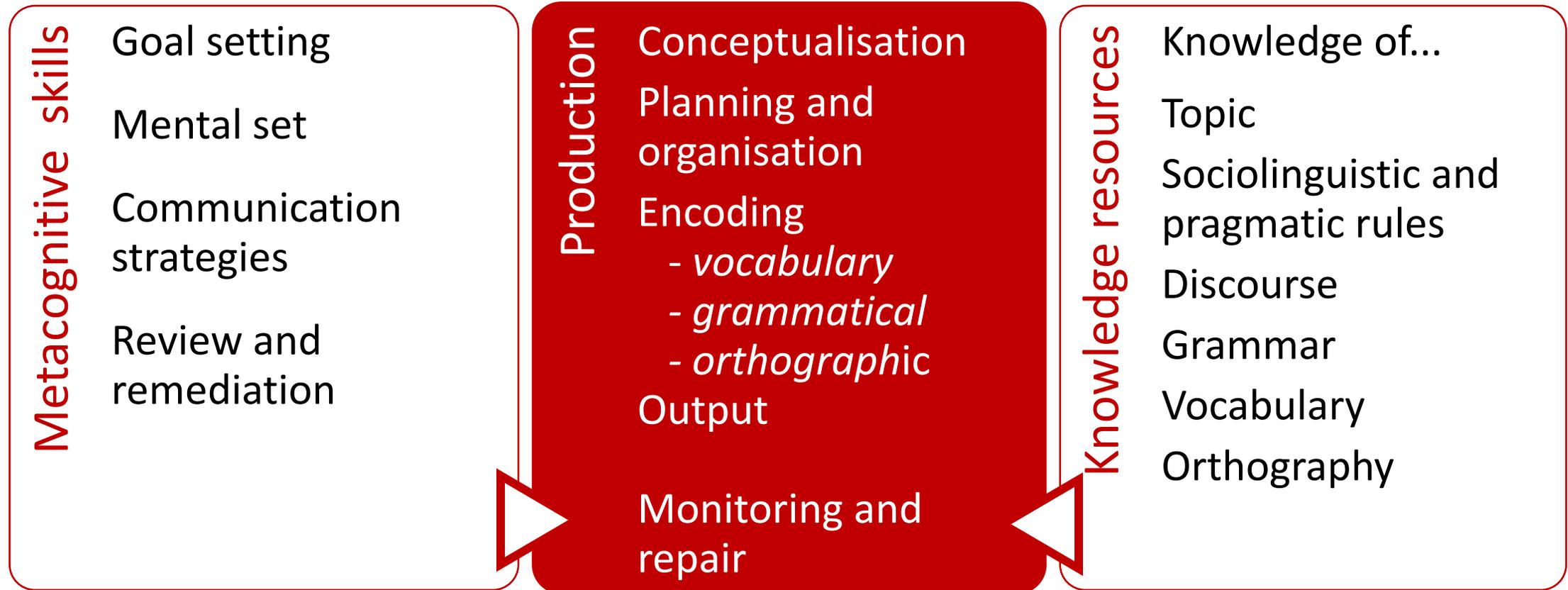
Productive language processing



Social context:

Purpose, audience, genre etc.

What is Writing?



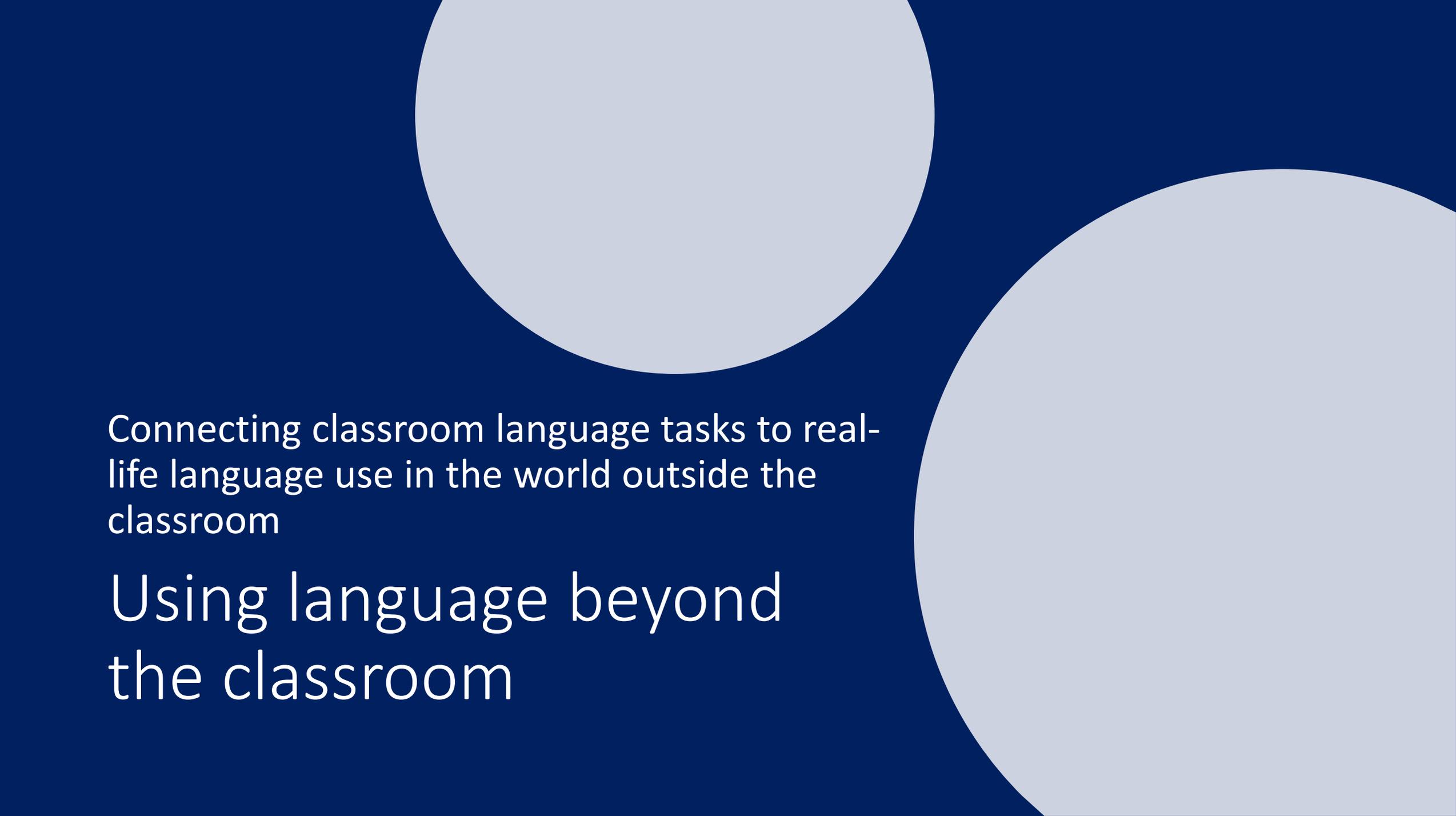
Green (2013) A simplified model of language production (after Chenoweth and Hayes 2003)

How should we assess Writing?

A common-sense answer ...

The best way to test people's writing ability is to get them to write

(Hughes, 2003)



Connecting classroom language tasks to real-life language use in the world outside the classroom

Using language beyond the classroom

Writing Test Tasks

Nature of input

- Spoken/ visual/ written
- Controlled/ impromptu
- Length/ complexity/ number of speakers
- Topic
- Planning time

Nature of (expected) response

- Length
- Interaction
- Text type
- Functions
- Linguistic features
- Purpose

Relationship between input and response

- Reactivity: degree of reciprocity/ interaction involved
- Scope: amount and range of input to be processed in order to respond
- Directness: extent to which response can be made using information in input, or whether test taker must also rely on contextual information/ real world knowledge.

Bachman & Palmer (2010)

Making a complaint about a faulty product

- Nature of input
- Nature of (expected) response
- Relationship between input and response

Making a complaint about a faulty product

- Mental representation/ conceptualisation

What happened to make you want to complain?

When is it appropriate to complain about a product or service?

When is it not appropriate?

What do you want to achieve when you complain?

How would *you* feel about receiving a complaint? How would you respond?

Is it better to talk to someone about your complaint, or to write?

What are the advantages and disadvantages of each?

Making a complaint about a faulty product

- Planning and organisation

What kinds of information do you think you need to include when you make a complaint?

What does the recipient need to know about the problem?

What does the recipient need to know about the writer?

What conventions should you follow?

How is it best to organise the information? What comes first? What comes last?

Making a complaint about a faulty product

- Encoding
 - Appropriate choice of language
 - getting the tone right
 - being informative, relevant and efficient
 - Range and accuracy

Dear Mr. or Ms. President:

I am writing this letter because I couldn't get anywhere by talking to the manager of your store. Apparently, she never heard of the old saying, "The customer is always right."

It all started in May when I returned the DooDad Plus because it was missing a part. I don't suppose that you have ever tried to assemble a DooDad Plus, but it just can't be done without all the parts!

I've been down to your store a thousand times over the past two months, and every time somebody just taps on the computer and smiles and says the missing part has been sent from the warehouse. Where is this warehouse — Australia?

So today I went down to your store and dragged the so-called manager out of her coffee break to explain that I was giving up. All I wanted was my money back. So what does this lady tell me? That it's "against store policy" to refund my money because I had already opened the package!

This is insane! I have already reported you to the Better Business Bureau. Now, what are you going to do about it?

Sincerely,

Mr. M. Wilson www.thoughtco.com

Dear Mr. Smith:

Re: Broken sofa

On February 5, 2018 I bought a green *Manhattan* sofa, model number 25811 at the Furniture Gallery located at 1834 W. Elm Ave. Springfield, TX 77001. I paid \$650.00 for the sofa on my credit card. Furniture Gallery delivered it to my home on February 12.

Unfortunately, the sofa is defective. I am disappointed because one of the legs broke off on February 28. I have not used this sofa in a way that would cause any damage. I returned to the store on March 3 and March 5 but the store manager, Aaron, would not speak to me.

To resolve the problem, I would appreciate if your company would pick up this sofa, for free, and refund the \$650 I paid. Enclosed are copies of my records, including my receipt, delivery invoice, and photos of the broken sofa.

I look forward to your reply and a resolution to my problem and will wait until April 5, 2017 before seeking help from a consumer protection agency or Better Business Bureau. Please contact me at the above address or by phone at (281-555-1234).

Sincerely,

Morgan Wilson

References

Bachman, L. and Palmer, A. (2010) *Language Assessment in Practice*. Oxford: Oxford University Press

Green, A. (2014) *Exploring Language Assessment and Testing: Language in Action*. New York, NY: Routledge

Chenoweth, N. A., & Hayes, J. R. (2001). Fluency in writing: Generating text in L1 and L2. *Written communication*, 18(1), 80-98.