

# REFRESH: THE CHANGING ROLE OF FRESHMAN ENGLISH

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**Edited by**

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Meral Güçeri

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Sabancı  
Üniversitesi



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# FOREWORD

**Meral Güçeri**

Freshman English scholars gathered together at the Sabancı University Karaköy Premises, the Minerva Palace, to share their research and teaching ideas at our conference titled “Refresh: the Changing Role of Freshman English”, which was held on 18 and 19 September 2014. The Conference brought together experts from multiple disciplines to discuss how to sustain continuous societal development by optimizing critical thinking skills in their inter-disciplinary context.

The conference theme emphasised the significant role of research in academic learning and instruction. The knowledge base and abilities that are required for our societies to progress have to be redefined to adapt to the modern world which is fast-moving and complex. Traditionally, the emphasis has been on basic skills and knowledge within scientific fields, and the importance of these factors in societal development is still very high; however, on top of basic skills and fundamental knowledge, we need to put much more effort into expanding the reflective capacity of our society as a whole. We need to put not only individual but also collective effort to accomplish this goal. Education should be at the heart of building such an innovative and flourishing society, and placing education at the centre to ignite this process. It is an ambitious goal, for which the means to achieve it is by enabling all involved parties to be reflective in both teaching and learning, students and the teachers alike. These ideas shaped the discussions during the Conference, where papers and plenary talks highlighted that reflective citizenship lies at the heart of contemporary society.

During the Conference, we explored how we can encourage students to engage in knowledge production and own their role in the process. We also highlighted the term “interdisciplinary knowledge” within the fields of learning and instruction. The Conference provided motivated researchers from across the world with a forum to connect with one another, both formally and informally, expanding their networks, which we hope will last far beyond the time of our conference!

We believe that the city of Istanbul and the Conference offered the optimal circumstances for a fruitful scholarly exchange in a very special venue, the Minerva Palace. Minerva was the Roman goddess whom the Romans from the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC onwards equated with the Greek goddess Athena. She was the virgin goddess of poetry, medicine, wisdom, commerce, weaving, crafts and magic.

We wanted the Conference to reflect a hint of each of these virtues: Academic writing is a craft which weaves the fabric of scientific knowledge with literary skill. It is the medicine of the scientist who sometimes struggles to communicate his or her genius! Oral presentations and seminars equip our Freshmen with the tools for them to commercialize their scientific knowledge gained in the later years of their higher education. Although this combination may sound like some sort of magic, instructors strive to bring out the best in the students of Freshman English.

Minerva's wisdom, we believe, guided our discussions in this conference while our participants enjoyed the sessions and the magic city of Istanbul that combines two continents with a rich heritage dating back thousands of years with a contemporary flair.

We would very much like to thank our dearest colleagues who have come all the way from Algeria, Azerbaijan, Finland, France, Iran, Japan, Northern Cyprus, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, UAE, the UK, and the USA.

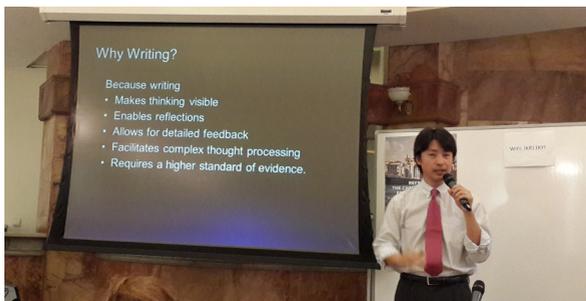
We would also like to extend our very special thanks to our plenary speakers who are not only lecturers and researchers but also writers in the field of linguistics, Paul Kei Matsuda, Derin Atay and Mark James and, last but not least, our thanks go to our conference sponsors the American Embassy, Cultural Affairs Regional ELO, Pearson Educational and Educational Testing Services (ETS).



# CRITICAL THINKING and WRITING AN INTEGRATED APPROACH

Paul Kei Matsuda

*This plenary speech was summarized  
by Meral Güçeri*



Paul Kei Matsuda started his plenary session by sharing “vitamin” and “daily mineral supplement” commercials from the media, and asked whether the audience took vitamins or minerals on a daily basis. The most crucial point was whether these supplements should be used for chronic disease prevention. Relying on the consumer reports, Matsuda shared the pros and cons of daily intake, and whether sometimes supplements could be beneficial or a health hazard. More examples, related to the correlations between consumption of milk and dairy products and mortality rates, were also shared in the introduction of Matsuda’s presentation.

Matsuda then asked what critical thinking is and elicited answers before he displayed the following figure :

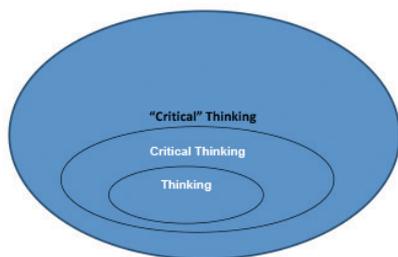


Figure 1: Critical thinking  
Matsuda (2014)

Matsuda’s explanation of Figure 1 outlined the following ideas: Critical thinking is the ability to use reasoning to construct and evaluate arguments. Basic thinking involves recognizing, describing, explaining, classifying and making sense. Advanced thinking which is considered to be critical thinking however, requires

questioning, problem solving, evaluating, arguing and generating knowledge. Meta-thinking; consists of question posing, problematising, deconstructing, transforming and making a difference. He stressed that critical thinking is not necessarily negative thinking even though the title may sound so.

Matsuda, citing from Keysar, Hayakawa, & An (2013), argued that language proficiency in academic and professional contexts would not go very far unless critical thinking were integrated. He added that critical thinking ability works differently in L1 and L2, although intuitively, one may think that people would either make the same choices regardless of the language they are using, or that the difficulty of using a foreign language would make decisions less systematic.

Keysar et al. (Ibid.) discovered that foreign language use reduced biases in decision making. They explain this effect by saying that “using a foreign language reduces decision-making biases... because a foreign language provides greater cognitive and emotional distance than a native tongue does.”(p.661).

Matsuda then asked how critical thinking is taught, and provided the following examples as illustrations (adapted from <http://www.cof.orst.edu>):

Q1: In the United States, is it legal for a man to marry his widow’s sister?

The following answers are provided to trigger critical analysis:

1. Yes, as long as she is alive.
2. Yes, if the man is from the United States.
3. No, it is illegal in the United States to marry your own widow’s sister.
4. There is no law against it because you cannot marry your widow’s sister—you are dead.

Q2. Who is the doctor?

A man and his son were in a terrible accident, the man died. The son was rushed into emergency surgery. The doctor walked into the room looked down at the boy and said “I can't operate on this boy, he's my son.” Who is the doctor? (<http://www.brain teasercentral.com>)

Analyzing both examples, Matsuda explained the logic behind the arguments in two categories as: (i) formal logic, which uses syllogisms, symbolic logic, Venn diagrams, fallacies, etc and, (ii) informal logic, where he referred to Aristotle, Toulmin and Perelman. Then, he argued that attempts to teach abstract theories of argument are often lost on students whereas writing provides situated learning opportunities because it makes thinking visible, enables reflections, allows for detailed feedback, facilitates complex thought processing and requires a higher standard of evidence.

Writing takes place in several stages which can be summarized under the four activities of planning, reading, drafting and revising.

- Planning consists of identifying issues, questions, dissonances, formulating research questions, defining and examining the audience and finally developing and organizing arguments.
- Reading is an indispensable component of academic writing and improves while writing academic essays, and is enhanced through the following abilities:

Identifying and evaluating sources

Considering various perspectives

Reflecting on existing knowledge

Examining existing arguments

Developing language as thinking tools.

- Matsuda highlighted the stages of drafting and revising in academic writing with an emphasis on the following abilities:

Anticipating audience reactions

Choosing words carefully

Providing enough detail

Being clear and accurate

Attributing sources

Qualifying claims

Paul Kei Matsuda's plenary talk ended with a final question formulated as follows:

"She told him that she loved him."

Task: Try inserting "only" into different places in this sentence, and see how meaning changes.

She told him that she loved him.

Only she told him that she loved him.

She only told him that she loved him.

She told only him that she loved him.

She told him only that she loved him.

She told him that only she loved him.

She told him that she only loved him.

She told him that she loved only him.

She told him that she loved him only.

Having elicited all the above options, there appeared the question: "who told you that?" on the slide which stressed the role of narrator/author in critical analysis and critical thinking.

Paul Kei Matsuda concluded by emphasizing that engaging the learners and providing them with feedback are two key items for developing critical thinking.

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Keysar, B., Hayakawa, S. L., & An S. G. (2013). The foreign-language effect: Thinking in a foreign tongue reduces decision biases. *Psychological Science*, 23(6), 661-668



## TRANSFER of LEARNING in ENGLISH for ACADEMIC PURPOSES (EAP) EDUCATION

**Mark A. James**

The topic of this presentation is learning transfer in English-for-academic-purposes (EAP) education, and the focus is on four key questions:

1. What is learning transfer?
2. Why is learning transfer important in EAP education?
3. What kind of learning transfer, if any, occurs in EAP education?
4. What can EAP educators do to help promote learning transfer?

### What is learning transfer?

Generally speaking, learning transfer refers to the application of learning in new situations (e.g., Haskell, 2001; Perkins & Salomon, 1994). Examples of learning transfer include situations in which someone who has learned how to drive a car then applies that learning when driving a truck for the first time, or when someone who has learned how to play guitar then applies that learning when trying to play piano for the first time, or when someone who has learned math at school then applies that learning when she or he goes shopping.

### Why is learning transfer important in EAP education?

Formal education of any type rests on an expectation that learning will transfer. In many countries around the world, children are required to spend years in a school system that includes regular classes in areas such as math, science, history, and geography. To justify this massive investment of a society's resources and an individual's time, there is obviously an expectation that time spent in the school system will impact students' lives in some way beyond school. This expectation may be explicit, for example stated in a mission statement or a list of goals in a curriculum document; or it may be only implicit. In either case, formal education systems rest on expectations that learning in school can and will transfer.

With this in mind, educators in any subject area should be concerned about transfer; however, in EAP education, attention to transfer is particularly important. EAP education is 'any English teaching that relates to a study purpose' (Dudley-Evans & St.John, 1998, p.34), for example, the provision of English

courses to help non-native speakers of English successfully navigate through academic courses or programs taught partially or fully in English. Because these EAP courses are often taken immediately before or while a student is in academic courses or programs taught in English, there is a relatively immediate need for students to transfer their EAP learning.

If EAP educators could safely assume that learning would transfer, the need to be concerned about transfer would diminish; however, research has shown that transfer cannot be assumed. For example, in a well-known early study of transfer (Thorndike & Woodworth, 1901), a group of people practiced estimating the area of rectangles. Through training sessions, the participants improved their ability; however, when they were then tested on estimating the areas of a larger range of rectangles and other shapes, the participants did not do as well as they had during training. The researchers concluded that the participants' learning did not freely transfer. Since then, a large body of research has shown that while learning can transfer, it often does not (see Haskell, 2001).

This will not come as a surprise to many EAP educators. Teachers may have their own examples of situations in which students have had difficulty transferring learning. Perkins (2009) for example referred to a physics professor whose students had successfully learned in class how to calculate how long it would take a ball to fall to the ground from the top of a tower; however, when the students then had a test question asking them to calculate how long it would take a ball to fall to the bottom of a well, they complained that they had not been given any questions about wells in class.

### **What kind of learning transfer, if any, occurs in EAP education?**

Fortunately, research has explored and shed light on transfer in EAP contexts. First, research has suggested that, generally speaking, EAP learning can transfer. A number of studies have produced evidence that students transfer learning from EAP courses to work in other courses, and this research has been done in a range of EAP contexts, including colleges and universities in Australia (Dooley, 2010; Terraschke & Wahid, 2011), Bahrain (Hayes, Holden-Rachiotis, Kavanagh, & Otoom, 2011), Canada (Currie, 1999; James, 2006a), New Zealand (Basturkmen & Lewis, 2002), and the United States (James, 2010; Kasper, 1997; Leki, 1995; Leki & Carson, 1994; Moulton & Holmes, 2000; Snow & Brinton, 1988; Song, 2006; Spack, 1997). For example, some studies (Kasper, 1997; Song, 2006) have examined students' academic records, and have shown that students who took a particular EAP course had significantly better GPAs and graduation rates than students who did not take that course, and this shows that something transferred from the EAP course.

Second, research suggests that a variety of kinds of EAP learning can transfer. This includes learning related to reading (Hayes et al, 2011; James, 2006a; Snow & Brinton, 1988; Spack, 1997; Terraschke & Wahid, 2011), writing (Basturkmen & Lewis, 2002; Dooley, 2010; Hayes et al, 2011; James, 2006a, 2010; Leki, 1995; Leki & Carson, 1994; Moulton & Holmes, 2000; Snow & Brinton, 1988; Terraschke & Wahid, 2011), listening (Hayes et al, 2011; James, 2006a; Snow & Brinton, 1988), speaking (James, 2006a;

Moulton & Holmes, 2000), and academic study in general (e.g., managing time [Hayes et al, 2011; Snow & Brinton, 1988], finding sources [Leki & Carson, 1994; Moulton & Holmes, 2000], preparing for tests [James, 2006a], and conducting analyses [Currie, 1999]).

Third, research points to specific circumstances of transfer of EAP learning (see James, 2014). For example, EAP learning transfer can have a positive impact on the quality of a student's work (e.g., a higher score on a vocabulary or grammar test, or making a smaller number of mistakes in an essay); however, less is known about whether transfer can have an impact on students' speed or approach when they are doing academic work. Also, EAP learning transfer may be prompted (e.g., in activities that provide explicit hints to students about what they should transfer, e.g., multiple choice questions), but it may also be spontaneous (e.g., in activities that do not provide explicit hints about what the students should transfer, e.g., an open-ended essay or group discussion). Finally, EAP learning can transfer across varying distances: when the learning situation and the transfer situations are similar (e.g., same time or place, same kind of subject matter, activities with a similar format), but also when the learning and the transfer situations are different in some ways (e.g., separated by several weeks or months, or when these situations involve working with different subject matter, or in different locations with different people, or they involve different kinds of activities).

### **What can EAP educators do to help promote learning transfer?**

Since transfer of EAP learning is not inevitable, it is prudent for EAP educators to take steps to try to make their courses as conducive to transfer as possible. One way to do this is by maximizing the transfer-promoting potential of textbooks used in EAP courses. This can be done by identifying the learning outcomes targeted in a given textbook unit and determining if these targeted outcomes are addressed in ways that can help to promote transfer. More specifically, for any given targeted outcome, the following questions (based on ideas described by Fogarty, Perkins, & Barell [1992], James [2006b], and Perkins & Salmon [1988]) can be asked:

- How, if at all, does the unit make clear that the targeted outcome can be applied outside the EAP classroom?
- How, if at all, does the unit demonstrate the targeted outcome?
- Which activities, if any, require students to practice the targeted outcome?
  - o Which of those activities, if any, require students to pretend to be some other situation (e.g., outside the EAP classroom)?
  - o Which of those activities, if any, require students to use the target outcome to solve problems? With what content and in what context?
- What, if anything, does the unit require students to generalize about related to the targeted outcome?
- What, if anything, does the unit require students to analogize about related to the targeted outcome?

- How, if at all, does the unit require students to reflect on their ability to use the targeted outcome?

Affirmative answers to these questions suggest a textbook addresses a targeted learning outcome in ways that can help to promote transfer; the more systematically a textbook does this, the greater its transfer-promoting potential.

To illustrate, if a teacher was using, for example, the textbook *Academic Encounters* (Sanabria, 2012), the teacher could examine the first unit in the book. That unit includes a variety of target learning outcomes, one of which is sharing opinions while speaking. A teacher looking through the unit to see how this target outcome is treated would find the following:

1. The unit makes clear that students can share their opinions outside the EAP classroom, because one of the activities that requires students to share opinions is also titled "After the lecture" (p.20). This title points explicitly to one situation outside EAP classrooms in which students can share their opinions after lectures.
2. The unit demonstrates how to share opinions, because one of the activities that requires students to practice sharing opinions includes a written example (p.15)
3. The unit requires students to practice sharing opinions, in several activities (p.3, 5, 14, 20). Of the practice activities, none involve pretending to be in situations outside the EAP class, and none involve solving problems. (However, for some of the other targeted outcomes in this unit, there are practice activities that involve pretending to be in situations outside the EAP class [e.g., a role-play, p.11] and that involve solving problems [e.g., deciding if information is surprising, p.6].)
4. The unit requires students to generalize about sharing opinions, because students are given the specific words and phrases I think, I believe, I feel, and In my opinion, and they are told that these are ways to express one's opinion (p.15). In this case, students are given the generalization, but it is also possible for students to be asked to come up with a generalization themselves (e.g., by looking at examples and trying to identify general patterns).
5. The unit does not require students to analogize about sharing opinions. (However, students are required to analogize in relation to other targeted outcomes in this unit, for example while comparing culture to an iceberg [p.32-33].)
6. The unit requires students to reflect on their ability to share opinions, because one of the activities asks students to compare their answers from an opinion-sharing activity with each other (p.21). This kind of comparison with other students' work or with a provided model gives students the chance to notice their own strengths and weaknesses related to the target outcome.

With this kind of information, a teacher is well-equipped to maximize a textbook's transfer-promoting potential. For example, to fill in gaps related to question 3 above, a teacher could create activities that require students to practice sharing opinions while pretending to be in other situations and while

solving a variety of problems (e.g., pretend to be classmates in a business course who have to decide what company to choose for a case study project; pretend to be members of student committee that has been asked by university administration to identify the biggest problems with the university's curriculum).

## Conclusion

Evaluating a textbook in this way is a concrete step EAP teachers can take to make sure their courses are as conducive to transfer as possible. This is worthwhile because learning transfer is a fundamental goal of EAP education, and research shows that while EAP instruction can lead to learning that transfers, such transfer is not inevitable. One final suggestion is that teachers who take this kind of practical step consider documenting their efforts by carrying out and publishing research: Research on EAP education has shed useful light on transfer, but the picture is incomplete; with this in mind, and given the obvious importance of learning transfer in EAP education, further research on this topic can be of substantial value.

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## IS CRITICAL THINKING TEACHABLE in TERTIARY EDUCATION?

**Derin Atay**

In today's information age, obtaining facts is hardly a challenge. Students are surrounded by information through online databases, books, articles, newspapers and social networking sites. The real challenge today is

the development of the skills that are needed to critique and process this easy to obtain information.

The information age necessitates critical thinking as an important element of life success.

The intellectual roots of critical thinking are the teaching practice and vision of Socrates 2500 years ago (Holme, 1992). The Greek philosopher established the importance of asking questions that probe into thinking before a person accepts ideas as worthy of belief (Wright, 2012). This method, known as Socratic questioning, is still the best known critical thinking teaching strategy. Socratic practice was followed by the critical thinking of Plato, Aristotle, and many other Greek skeptics, all of whom highlighted the fact that only the educated mind is capable of seeing what lies beyond the surface meaning or image (Paul, Elder, & Bartell, 1997). In the middle ages systematic critical thinking became more prevalent in the works of intellectuals who increased people's awareness both on "the potential power of reasoning" and the necessity of critical thinking (Paul, Elder, & Bartell, 1997, para.5). During the 15th and 16th centuries, the interest in critical thinking continued; a flood of scholars in Europe studied critical thinking in a wide range of fields from religion and art to human nature and law. As Paul and Elder (2013) stated "they proceeded with the assumption that most of the domains of human life were in need of searching, analysis and critique" (p. 177).

There are two literatures that have shaped much of the writing on critical thinking in the educational foundations over the past two decades: Dewey's Progressive Education and Pablo Freire's Critical Pedagogy. They both underscore the key importance of the term 'critical' in education, during which teachers should urge students to question the facts taken for granted by an overwhelming majority (Burbules & Berk, 1999). According to Dewey (1997) in order to become informed participants in a democracy, students should be encouraged to be actively involved in their learning through problem solving and practical application. Similarly, Freire (2005) emphasizes the importance of asking questions and criticizes the existing educational programs employing the so-called "banking method", in which knowledge is in the hands of some who consider themselves knowledgeable. These people bestow knowledge as a gift to those who they consider to know nothing. Through this education period, learners gradually become accustomed to passively receiving without questioning (Freire, 2005).

Many people believe that critical thinking-or what they take to be critical thinking-makes one excessively critical, and creatively constrained (Vaughn, 2013). Critical here means ‘faultfinding’ but the ‘critical’in critical thinking is used in the sense of exercising or involving careful judgment or judicious evaluation (Paul & Elder, 2001; 2006). In order to think critically, a person should have dispositions, such as inquisitiveness, analyticity and open-mindedness, and skills, such as interpretation, analysis, evaluation, inference, explanation and self-regulation. Any comprehensive conceptualization of critical thinking must incorporate a dispositional component (Facione, Giancarlo, Facione, & Gainen, 1995). If dispositions are weak, it is unlikely that strong thinking skills will develop.

Results of studies revealed that Turkish university students have low to moderate levels of critical thinking; many of the participants were found to have difficulties in exhibiting basic skills of general reasoning and argumentation (Alagözlü, 2007; Doğanay, Taş & Erden, 2007; Özdemir, 2005). Although it is widely agreed that fostering students’critical thinking skills is necessary, discussion continues about how this can be realized through educational efforts.

Teachers play a crucial role in developing the critical thinking skills of their students; thus, it is necessary that critical thinking become a component of the courses given at teacher education departments. In 2014, two studies were conducted in the English Language Teaching Department of Marmara University to observe the effects of critical thinking based instruction on the critical thinking dispositions, L2 reading performance, and L2 writing performance of the participating pre-service teachers. The critical thinking instruction was integrated into freshman advanced reading/writing (Bayram, 2015; Güner, 2015).Both studies, using different teaching materials, incorporated the basic principles of critical thinking such as questioning, dialogue, collaboration and debate. Data were collected by means of the California Critical Thinking Inventory (Facione & Facione, 1992), the Critical Reading Self-Efficacy Scale (Küçükoğlu, 2008), focus group interviews, reading comprehension tests, and essays of pre-service teachers. Results revealed that there was an increase in the critical thinking disposition, L2 reading and writing performance of the participants, yet it seemed that the length of the instruction, 8 weeks, was not sufficient for a statistically significant rise.

These studies along with many others indicate that teaching critical thinking involves more than asking people to "look critically" at something, as if criticism is a mechanical task. Learners should be involved in the critical thinking tasks from early education on to benefit from the process. Although critical thinking seems to be one of the aims of the education in Turkey, practical application of this concept is still far from being satisfactory. We should not forget that a natural consequence of not thinking critically is a loss of personal freedom and this can only be avoided if this skill is fostered from early education onward.

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# MANAGING MILLENNIALS (GENERATION Y)

Meral Güçeri and Shari Young

## Introduction

Educators have always observed a mismatch between the way learners think and behave to those from previous generations. When Generation Y is concerned, Sternberg (2012) claims that those who were born between 1980 and 2000 are to be considered in this category. Reilly (2012) defines Generation Y as kinesthetic and visual individuals who are feedback-dependent and very comfortable with technology. Sternberg (2012) collated the following features which characterize Generation Y:

- Feeling of specialness
- Tendency to be sheltered from negative life experiences and failure by parents
- Sense of confidence
- Orientation towards being a team player
- Feelings of pressure: financial, family and social
- Desire to achieve success
- Feeling of optimism

Additionally, Sternberg (2012) provides a collection of observations from educators working with Generation Y:

- Are they intent on intellectual Armageddon: refusing to attend class, determined to finish degrees without visiting the library?
- Do they demand instant attention? Do they get parents to harass staff if they do not receive it?
- They are unable to communicate without a mobile phone or computer and unable to write assignments in foreign languages.
- Their unique characteristics impact on learning and teaching strategies- particularly in relation to technology-in disciplines as diverse as engineering (Blashki, Nichol, Jia & Promparamote, 2007), medicine (Sandars & Morrison, 2007), nursing (Pardue & Morgan), and management.

Regarding Generation Y's performance, Shaw & Fairhurst (2008) claim that they neither care about lecturer feedback nor perform well in assignments since they less likely to take personal responsibility for their results and how to improve in the future. Nimon (2007) states that Generation Y is willing to accept authority and follow rules, but the areas related to time management, long term commitment, conflict resolution and independent critical thought appear to be problematic. Baurlein (2008) argues that they are "no more learned or skillful than their predecessors, no more knowledgeable, fluent, up-to-date, or inquisitive, except in the materials of youth culture" (p.8).

## The Study

The aim of this study is to identify key behaviors emerging in Freshman and faculty classes, then create opportunities to find out how teachers are addressing these issues, what strategies they employ and how effective they are.

The context in which we conducted the study is an English medium university with an interdisciplinary approach which allows inter-faculty communication and collaboration. Freshman and junior students were involved in the research (156 students). Freshmen take the same courses regardless of the faculty they are enrolled in. Juniors were from the School of Management. All Freshman lecturers and instructors (43 all together) were invited to participate in the study.

## Method

The qualitative research method was employed to collect data from the students, university lecturers and the instructors. First, questionnaires were designed and administered online. Then, focus group meetings were organized. Finally, responses from the students and the lecturers were compared to identify the similarities and differences of perceptions regarding learner behavior.

## Data Collection

Data collection took place in two phases. Phase 1 consisted of questionnaire administration and Phase 2 was composed of focus group meetings. There were two questionnaires with ten questions each. Questionnaire 1 was designed for freshmen, sophomore and juniors to identify learner perceptions regarding their accountability and responsibility for taking on their own learning. Questionnaire 2 was sent to the faculty to obtain their perceptions regarding changing learner behavior. Finally, a focus group meeting was organized with the faculty in order to share the data collected, and to clarify some aspects regarding the questions.

52 students and 7 lecturers responded to the questionnaires. 14 faculty members attended the focus group meeting. There were 156 students and of these, 52 could be considered a representative sample. However, out of 43 faculty members, 7 participants were considered to be a small number.

## Results/Discussion

As detailed above, two questionnaires were prepared, one for teachers and one for students. The two questionnaires were intended to be related to each other in the sense that the same behaviors were addressed in both, but from different perspectives. The behaviors we highlighted in the questionnaires were adapted from the work of our student counselor, who had identified some key student behaviors in the preparatory year.

The low return rate, particularly from teachers, was disappointing. It does however raise some interesting questions for future research.

We must also question our questionnaire design; there was a degree of ambiguity in the questions because of the form we chose. The teacher's questions asked respondents to quantify how often the behaviors occurred. However, if a teacher had one student who demonstrated the behavior, would they answer in the same way as a teacher for whom many students had demonstrated the behavior once? Perhaps teachers were simply unsure about how to accurately answer the questions. We cannot draw any reliable conclusions from this data.

Many of the responses in the student questionnaire however reveal attitudes and beliefs which are consistent with international findings. In response to the first question, the overwhelming majority of students (85%) felt they "needed" access to technology during classes. Although the question did not specify which technologies or how they were used, the follow-up focus group discussion made it clear that students were mostly concerned with having their smart phones on hand.

Most faculty teachers accept (or even encourage) their students' use of technology in class when it is used appropriately: to record a lecture, assist in note-taking, or to access support such as online dictionaries. However, our colleagues expressed exasperation at their students' limited use of technology for educational purposes. While our students are extremely capable with social media and a variety of apps, many have difficulty mastering Word functions and conventions for example, and indeed seem disinclined to learn them. This is also consistent with research in other countries; the assumption that Generation Y is highly technologically literate is true only up to a point. Where educational technology is concerned, they do not perform to the same standard.

The next group of questions worth examining is those relating to student attitudes about accepting responsibility. Questions about deadlines, negotiating grades, low performance, and being prepared for class were asked to determine whether there was a discrepancy between teacher expectations and those of students and, if so, whether that discrepancy was significant. It seems that this is where the biggest differences were found. The results from this group of questions seem to show that a substantial majority of students did not accept responsibility for class preparation, poor grades and meeting deadlines -traditionally all areas which are within the students' realm of control. More than 70% of respondents felt that they should be able to negotiate their deadlines, and in fact in the follow-up focus group discussion, some teachers were amenable to this. The key issue was whether the negotiation took place before or after the deadline had fallen. A degree of negotiation before the deadline, or indeed a collaborative decision between the class and the teacher about when the deadline should be, would probably work quite well with this generation of students.

The next question was about students' attitude to coming to class unprepared. There was almost a 50/50 split between students who felt that coming to class unprepared was "unavoidable" and those

who disagreed. Again, this result raises the need for further investigation- how do students organize their time in order to meet their responsibilities? What strategies do they know and use, and why in almost 50% of cases are these strategies not working? Is it just, as some teachers suggested in the focus group, that students cannot be bothered to prepare and just want the answers handed to them, or is there a real problem that is not being addressed in terms of student workloads and their ability to manage them? Furthermore, what effect is this level of unpreparedness having on classes? How are teachers managing this problem in class? What effect is it having on the quantity and quality of content being delivered?

The final two questions in this group produced perhaps the most worrying results in terms of student responsibility. In response to the statement “If I disagree with a grade I should be able to negotiate” almost 90% of the respondents agreed. There are two reasons why this is a potentially problematic development. Firstly, students seem to be assuming that grades are awarded on a completely subjective and discretionary basis. In fact, our assignments are all graded using established criteria which are shared with students and explained before the assignment is set. This brings us to the second issue, which is that of standards; university education is focused on the attainment of specific standards and the accumulation of knowledge and skills. The notion of standards and accumulated knowledge are essential to how degree programs are structured. Either students have overestimated their skill level and have not had sufficient feedback which connects their level of achievement with the criteria, or they think that criteria-based grading should be more of a guideline than a rule. The final question in this group asked students to agree or disagree with the statement that “Teachers should be more understanding about things that affect my performance negatively such as workload, illness and tiredness”. Overwhelmingly (95%), students agreed with this statement. In the university context, a big workload and tiredness are part of the deal; the workload tends to come in waves as due dates always seem to fall at the same time, and are often interspersed with mid-term and final exams. This has always been a fact of life for tertiary students, and although they do not have a great deal of control over when assignments and exams occur, or how many they have, they are usually made aware of this workload at the beginning of each semester. Further investigation into their motivations is certainly necessary to establish the roots of this behavior.

## Conclusion

It is clear that that there is a shift occurring in the profile of tertiary students currently attending universities. Although we cannot draw any direct conclusions from our preliminary research, we have found similarities in our students’ responses to those of students in other institutions. There does seem to be quite a difference between student expectations and those of their teachers; where teachers expect students at university to be more self-reliant and autonomous, it seems that our students do not share this view; or, at least have different understandings of what these terms mean. More research is

required in order to establish whether this is because of an attitudinal shift, or whether this generation of students have simply not developed the learning strategies they need.

Increasingly university teachers will need to bear this behavioral shift in mind in delivering their classes; student behaviors such as coming to class unprepared have a direct impact on class content. Research suggests that Generation Y require a different teaching approach because of their radically different learning style (Bennett et al 2008). They are less likely to respond to the traditional university lecture style of class; they prefer an interactive conversation. However, they require explicit instruction in educational technologies and learning strategies in order to allow them to meet the expectations of the tertiary learning environment.

Teachers will need a three directional approach in order to address the separate but related areas of behavior, lack of learning strategies, and changing learning styles. The behavior of Generation Y students may be linked to their unrealistic and idealistic expectations of university and life in general, possibly caused by an overly protected upbringing in which they were not allowed to fail. They have therefore never had the opportunity to reflect on their failures and develop strategies to improve. Teachers should be very clear and consistent about their expectations of student behavior, and may in fact develop these in collaboration with students, particularly in areas such as deadline policies.

Learning strategies must be explicitly taught and modeled by instructors, but at the university level many faculty members may balk at this. There may therefore be a need for University Learning Support centers to guide students in the essential skills they need to succeed in their classes; it can no longer be assumed that students have them when they arrive for their Freshman year. Skills such as time management, breaking down tasks, and group work skills now need to be taught to enable Generation Y to get the maximum benefit from their time at university.

Finally, as teachers of these students, we should address the mode of delivery of our lessons. Often we teach in the way that we responded to as students. However, Generation Y has grown up very differently from the one before. Our old favorites no longer work. Because we know this generation to be digital natives, it is often assumed that including more technology is the answer to teaching them. However, these students tend to use technology for entertainment, not education. They need instruction and support in using technology to help them in their studies. Similarly, Generation Y needs more collaboration, both with their peers and with instructors. They need to be able to have one-to-one time with their instructors, and respond best to a more fun approach (Eisner, 2004).

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# ENHANCING FRESHMAN STUDENTS' ACADEMIC WRITING LITERACY

Yasemin Kirkgöz

## Introduction

Owing to the advances in writing theories, teaching the linguistic and textual grammar of writing is no longer recognized as sufficient to make a student competent in academic writing. As confirmed by Canagarajah (2002, p.29)

“we have moved beyond both the product and process paradigms to situate these pedagogical activities in the specific discourse communities one is writing in/for.”

Indeed, the concept of discourse community (DC) provides a conceptual framework for investigating the pedagogical and social practices that determine students' academic writing needs. A DC comprises expert members and novices entering the community that operates on the basis of implicit and explicit public goals (Swales, 1990). Gee (1999) suggests that the DC is informative in that its members develop and use writing systems that are often specific to a particular community's goals, needs and ideologies.

A growing body of literature suggests that problems student writers experience result from the gaps between expectations of academic staff and student practice of what is involved in writing (Curry & Lillis, 2003; Lea & Street, 1998; Johns 1981; 1988). It is argued that English for Academic Purposes (EAP) writing instruction needs to provide novice writers with opportunities for practicing language and rhetorical expertise in the students' specific disciplines (Horowitz, 1986; Berkenkotter & Huckin, 1993; Ferris, 2003).

## Academic Writing as a Social Practice

Lea & Street (1998) conceptualized approaches to student writing and literacy in academic settings through the use of three overlapping models: study skills, academic socialization and academic literacies model. The study skills model is primarily concerned with the surface features of text, i.e., grammar, punctuation, and spelling. In this approach, discourse features are reduced to skills to be mastered on the assumption that mastery of the correct rules of grammar, syntax, punctuation and spelling will ensure student competence in academic writing.

Researchers on student writing often argue that concentrating on surface features as transferable skills often deflects attention from deep structures of writing academic conventions, and that there is a need for understanding the culture of different disciplines (Lillis, 2001, Lea & Street, 2000). This view has diverted attention to broader issues of learning, leading to the academic socialization approach. The academic socialization model conceptualizes writing in higher education as a process

of enculturation, through which students are inducted into academic norms, conventions and the discourse of a particular discipline, with the prospect that making the requirements of a discipline explicit to students will result in their becoming successful writers (Lea & Street, 1998).

The final approach is the academic literacies model, which views universities as discourse and power, and sees academic practices as reflecting issues of epistemology and identity rather than simply issues of skill or socialization. The model has been used to support student writing as a pedagogical frame for action. Lea and Street (2006) demonstrate that each model successively encapsulates the other with the academic socialization perspective taking account of study skills and building on the insights developed there.

Considered within the above framework, student writers need to be supported to familiarize them with writing conventions involved. As pointed out by Canagarajah (2002), in designing an EAP course, it is essential that EAP writing teachers make connections with students' disciplinary practices and become familiar with conventions accompanying text construction in related disciplinary community. Thus, understanding DC practices impacting upon discipline-specific student writing can provide an accurate social framework for the teaching of academic writing in different genres, i.e., responding to examination questions.

This study reports on the design and evaluation of an EAP writing course based upon the Lea and Street's (2000) academic socialization and academic literacies models. The course was designed for the freshman students of the Department of Economics (DE) offering subject courses in the medium of English language at a state university in Turkey. The EAP is the required course offered to only the first-year undergraduate students, along with students' disciplinary courses.

The following section provides a description of the design of the EAP writing course and the course evaluation process.

### **Designing the EAP Course**

It is agreed that needs assessment forms the basis of course design (West, 1994). The needs assessment, which I conducted in the DE with the first-year freshman students and lecturers, revealed that examination questions are the most common writing requirements, and that the students experience difficulties in responding to such questions. As the next stage, I obtained 110 questions from 28 different examination papers from the subject lecturers teaching the courses Introduction to Economics I and Introduction to Economics II to first-year students of DE, and analyzed each question in order to examine specific discourse characteristics (Kırkgöz, 2013). This collaboration with the subject lecturers enabled me, as the teacher and the researcher in the study, to base the EAP course upon real examination prompts in order to make the course relevant to the needs and requirements of the students.

The participants of the EAP writing course were 16 first year undergraduate Turkish students (12 female and four male, aged between 18 and 19). The study lasted over two semesters with three hours of weekly teaching. The students' level of language proficiency corresponded to low-intermediate level in that they had some writing skills related to topics of general interest, but they lacked any experience in disciplinary writing.

The EAP writing course was conceptualized in three cycles, following Lea and Street's (2000) *academic socialization* and *academic literacies models*, described earlier.

### **Cycle 1 in the EAP Course**

In this cycle, students were provided with composing strategies in rhetorical patterns most commonly occurring in scientific discourse, mainly at a paragraph level, for example, definition, exemplification, generalization, problem solving, hypotheses and prediction. The kind of examination prompts included in this cycle was from the definition category, requiring students to write short responses in paragraphs.

### **Cycle 2 in the EAP Course**

This stage - academic socialization - was concerned with enculturating students into disciplinary writings, moving from the paragraph level writing to composing longer texts. Students were supported to develop strategies in academic socialization to acquire the ways of writing and thinking that typified members of their DC. Coffin et al. (2003) suggest that EAP instructors need to develop parallel pedagogic tasks to those which the students will be involved in their DC. Following this suggestion, during this cycle, writings corresponded mainly to short paragraph responses to examination prompts including 'drawing tables, charts, etc., and explain....category, as identified during the needs assessment stage.

### **Cycle 3 in the EAP Course**

The writings in this cycle were more complex and dynamic, involving both epistemology and identities (Lea & Street, 2006). The student writers were engaged in writings to questions which asked draw tables, charts, etc., explain.... and how would you do... if.... type of responses.

### **Evaluation of the EAP Writing Course**

To evaluate the EAP course, I collected data from three sources; students' self-assessment of their writings using portfolio, my evaluation of student writings and subject lecturers' comments on student writings.

### **Students' Self-Assessment of Their Writings**

An approach to assessment well-suited to trace the growth and development of the skills of student writers is portfolios. Portfolio assessment was used to assess students' writing development, writing processes and products. Another important component of the portfolio involves reflection and self-

assessment, ‘the mental process, through which human beings convert experience into personal knowledge’ (Jones & Shelton, 2006, p.51). Students articulate their thoughts in writing assignments, in which they may read and act on the tutor’s comments ‘because students know that it is their responsibility to demonstrate proficiency in certain defined learning outcomes’ (Danielson & Abrutyn, 1997, p.16). The Portfolio not only provides a more accurate assessment of student writings across a range of genres, but also helps students to understand the developments they have experienced in their writing practices.

After each writing task, the students reflected on how they performed the task, what they learned and what kind of changes, if any, they experienced as novice writers. Content analysis of students’ essays revealed that the EAP writing course helped student writers improve their academic literacy in responding to examination questions, influenced their socialization process, and contributed significantly to their evolving identity as economics writers. Student writers developed greater awareness in composing different rhetorical texts and in responding to different types of examination questions. In addition, significant differences in the students’ use of disciplinary vocabulary and writing at the deeper disciplinary knowledge level were observed.

### **The Researcher’s Evaluation of Student Writings**

I provided feedback on each piece of student writing using a checklist adopted from Ferris (2003), which comprised four components: content, rhetorical organization, use of readings, language and mechanics. Feedback accompanied with oral commentary through conferences was given to provide suggestions for revision of the text. After this, students revised their writing and included it in their portfolios.

The students were graded in this EAP course through a written examination, which I administered at the end of each cycle in the EAP course. The written examination was worth 50% of the total course grade. The remaining 50% of the course grade was obtained from the students’ regular writings in response to examination questions.

## Subject Lecturers' Comments on Student Writings

An important dimension of the literacy practices is the pragmatic dimension of student writing. It is suggested that expert members of academic discourse communities, e.g. professors and teaching assistants, can serve ESL students 'as their unsuspecting surrogates in the trial and error of learning' (Smith, 1988, p.22) via their written products. In order to ensure that students' writings are consistent with the expected disciplinary writing, I invited subject lecturers to comment on student writings to find out how closely student writings matched the economics discourse, particularly during the third cycle in the EAP writing course. Subject lecturers assessed samples of student writings mainly at the epistemological level out of three criteria: completely appropriate, partially appropriate and inappropriate in meeting the lecturers' writing requirements. Out of 24 writings commented upon by the lecturers, 18 were found completely appropriate and 6 partially appropriate, which were revised by the students in accordance with the comments received. The lecturers' comments on student writing pointed to a successful socialization dimension of the writing course.

## Conclusion

This study investigated designing and implementing an EAP writing course based upon Lea and Street's academic socialization and academic literacies models. The findings reveal that over a period of two semesters, students became socialized into the writing conventions of their DC. An integral part of the socialization process was the evidence of learning how to respond to different question types appropriately within the rules governed by the DC. Also evidenced by their writings, the students' written discourse changed considerably, revealing the extent of their socialization, and meeting the expectations of disciplinary lecturers. In addition, my collaboration as the language expert with the subject lecturers, contributed to the effectiveness of the course. Overall, the EAP writing course has been highly effective in promoting students' written responses to examination questions and developing their academic literacy, moving them from novice writers to skilled writers in the discourse of economics.

The present EAP course was developed for the students of one academic discipline. However, it must be pointed out that the steps followed in the present study can be repeated or adopted to suit the writing requirements of freshmen students in other disciplines.

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# CREATIVE LEARNING and INNOVATIVE TEACHING in TERTIARY EDUCATION

Zohra Geryville

## Introduction

With the spread of technology and expanding communications, the world becomes different from the earlier generations. This change gives rise to an important question as the one put by Kay (1991): 'What kind of citizen/worker will we need in the future?' Reasoning that 'success in today's job market often requires creativity, flexibility, and a readiness to see things in new ways' (Sternberg, 1997:23), the global marketplace then needs new generations of workers who are creative and innovative. In this context, Henderson says: 'many of the fastest growing jobs and emerging industries rely on workers creative capacity; the ability to think unconventionally, question the herd, imagine new scenarios, and produce astonishing work' (Henderson, 2008:6). Therefore, creativity can be perceived to be an effective tool for economic progress.

A review of the literature related to the influence of global transformations in tertiary education reveals that the new economy necessitates a new pedagogy (Hartley, 2003). Because of the rapidly evolving nature of the global economy, education must in turn change (Edelson, 1999). As Cropley asserts, 'Considerations of the global marketplace and the skills needed for a successful career are reinforcing the importance of fostering creativity in higher education' (Cropley, 2001:158). Hence, the challenge for universities is to shift the focus of education onto the development of a population that is capable of thinking and taking new initiatives, not simply repeating what past generations have done. The learners must be equipped for a world of challenge and change (Fisher, 2004:11). Henceforth, university teachers have to promote creativity in a way that will allow students to be independent thinkers and encourage innovative ideas that will enable them to meet the demands of the flattened world and succeed in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

## I-Definition of creativity

To understand the essentiality of creative thinking skills in education, it is appropriate to define the concept of creativity. In fact, there is no single definition. Jeffrey and Craft state that 'creativity involves recognizing and solving problems, discovering alternative perspectives, and asking significant questions' (Jeffrey and Craft, 2004:81-82). According to Fisher, to create is to generate something, to be productive in thought, word or deed (Fisher, 2004:7). Additionally, creativity involves the thinking needed to analyze, emphasize, and make connections among ideas needed in the future (Pink, 2006). "Creative learning is therefore any learning which involves understanding and new awareness, which allows the learner to go beyond notional acquisition, and focuses on thinking skills" (Cachia, Ferrari, Mutska & Punie, 2010,19). The education system needs to be more focused on developing attitudes

that can lead to innovative ideas. It should ideally foster innovation as a prerequisite to creativity. Thus, innovative teaching is the process leading to creative learning, the implementation of new methods, tools and contents which could benefit learners and their creative potential.

Creativity in the present study is similar to the one defined by Robinson (2009). He points out that creativity refers to a process integrated into the classroom which gives the chance to explore real life problems, analyze and evaluate content, and passionately use their strengths to create original work with value. Thus, incorporating creative thinking in higher education is crucial in the sense that it gives learners the possibility for choice, exploration, self-discovery, and multiple perspectives as well as the opportunity to use their imagination to create something new and original.

## **II-Creativity in education: the teaching practices**

It has been recognized that higher education plays a key role in fostering and developing people's creative and innovative abilities for further learning and their working lives. Friedman (2006) argues that many students have not been taught the thinking skills necessary to acquire jobs and enter into vocations that require 21st century types of creative and problem-solving skills such as recognition of patterns and visual perception.

Policy-makers and educators, therefore, have to think seriously about the future challenges, and help students to meet the needs they will face in the 21st century. As it has already been mentioned, students need to know more than how to read and write, they must learn how to analyze, synthesize and evaluate. By simultaneously prioritizing basic skills, teachers can design learning experiences that challenge students to think creatively and to become lifelong learners (McCabe, 2000). Joubert says that "creative teaching is an art and it is not possible to teach teachers didactically how to be creative. Teachers need to develop a full repertoire of skills, which they can adapt and apply in different situations" (Joubert, 2001 :21).

Many researchers provide some strategies that can help teachers promote creative learning. Esquivel asserts that teachers' personalities can significantly influence the development of students' creativity. He reveals that teachers with "enthusiasm, empathy, dedication to students, personal flexibility, openness, creativity, and imagination are the most successful in helping students develop creativity" (Esquivel, 1995 : 189). The following table lists a number of teaching practices and approaches which, according to (Hamza & Farrow, 2000) and (Cropley, 2001), are conducive to the promotion of creative learning:

<b>Teachers' practices</b> (Hamza & Farrow, 2000)	<b>Teachers' Approaches and Methods</b> (Cropley, 2001)
- Establishing a student-centered learning environment in which the students and teacher learn together	- Maintaining an open mind by encouraging students to share new, opposing views and to raise challenging questions.
- Incorporating team efforts in the classroom Supporting independent study	- Avoiding competitive situations that generate envy
- Focusing on students' interests and choices	- Viewing errors as a constructive sign of learning
- Citing real-life events to which students can relate	- Teaching students to become aware of and to value their own creative thinking as well as that of others
- Asking open-ended questions that do not have a "yes" or "no" answer	- Helping students to handle the frustration and failure inherent in the learning process
- Creating challenging learning activities that inspire original thinking	- Providing a variety of stimulating materials and resources for development of ideas

### III-Data collection procedure

To investigate the importance of creativity in the tertiary education and how teachers can increase it among their students, a questionnaire was administered to 8 teachers at the English language department at Djillali Liabes University . The questionnaire consists of nine questions which are grouped into three sections. The first one looks at the research sample: their age, gender and their teaching experience. The second section covers The teachers' opinions about the importance of integrating the creative thinking in the teaching process and how they can nurture it among learners. The third section identifies the existing barriers that thwart the successful incorporation of creative thinking skills into the teaching practices.

### IV-Data analysis and interpretation

The analysis of data showed that all the teachers 100% viewed that creativity is important to be cultivated in the tertiary education. They replied that creativity, if effectively used, enhances students' motivation to do their best work. Furthermore, the subjects were asked about the teaching practices and approaches they use to nurture creativity among learners. 25% of the subjects focused on encouraging students' choice. According to them , choice helps students enjoy the actual learning experience, and increase their confidence in their ability to do the task.

In addition, 25% replied that they encourage multiple perspectives by accepting more than one answer, and stimulating further thought. What was so attractive among the answers (10%) was to give students a boost to connect what they study to their own lives. By doing so, they may be more engaged and more interested in than merely complying to do the given assignment. 10 % of the teachers also stated that they use authentic materials to motivate their learners and nurture their creativity.

From the obtained results, 20% of the instructors said that they enhance collaboration as a suitable practice to promote creative learning. They enable students to think and share their ideas with others ( a teacher or classmates). This kind of interaction gives the students an outlet for processing and expressing new information in the midst of the lesson as opposed to simply sitting and getting information.

Only 10% of the respondents said that they encouraged their students to create original works. For example, in a literature course, the students can be asked to finish a short story, and produce original work by using imagination. In the class of oral expression, the learners are encouraged to create new topics and new plays.

To investigate the reasons of their unreadiness to innovate and stimulate creative learning, the teachers were asked about the major problems that thwart them to accomplish this task. The results demonstrate that the most barriers to incorporate creativity into the teaching practices are the following: lack of teacher training; non collaboration between teachers; lack of time and over-crowded classes.

## V-Conclusion and recommendations

This was an exploratory study in which the views and attitudes of a very small number of Algerian lecturers were sampled. It can by no means be generalized yet, it gives an idea about the teaching practices that can stimulate the creative learning. As it has been identified in the data analysis, creativity is not effectively nurtured in the classroom. The teachers cited many problems that prevent them to implement their task including the absence of technology tools, lack of teacher training, time constraints, class sizes and non-collaboration between teachers. Hence, it is urgent and necessary to create and develop the conditions for promoting creativity. Therefore, it is recommended to make some transformations in the curriculum, in the classroom and in the teaching quality:

- The curriculum should make learning at the centre and beyond conventional notions of time and space. It should be opened to new learning and up to date experiences. The innovative curriculum should be based also on collaborative creation.
- The students should act as leaders. Their role has to shift from being passive consumers to active producers of information. For them, the instructor is an initiator, a collaborator, a coach and a mentor.

- The learners want now to find information, synthesize it, communicate it, collaborate with it, problem solve it and evaluate it.
- Creative learning requires innovative teaching. The educator must change from being authoritarian and rigid into flexible, resourceful, enthusiastic, supporter and harmonious. These characteristics call for an effective training. The teacher has to be trained to become reflective practitioner able to discern how a teaching method or practice can stifle creativity in his or her students.

If the policy-makers, curriculum designers and educators perceive the importance of these transformations and then accomplish them, the tertiary education learners will be undeniably ready to face the challenge of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

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# TEACHING EMBEDDED in GROUP TUTORIALS

Ersin Soylu

## Introduction

Increased student numbers coupled with reduced resources have resulted in larger class sizes at universities. This condition has encouraged a revision to the traditional lecturing style, and the requirement to improve teaching quality while “doing more with less” has increased interest in group tutoring (Topping, 1996, p. 321).

Either individually or in a group, the major aim of a tutorial is to stimulate the learning process. For an Academic English course which is offered to Freshman students, a tutorial may be about writing essays, academic vocabulary, listening skills, academic style, grammar review and/or discussion skills. Writing tutorials cover planning for an essay, content, organization, paragraphing, formatting, structure, citations and referencing. Academic vocabulary focuses on learning general vocabulary needed in the academic environment, and provides tips for learning and remembering new vocabulary the students come across. Listening skills tutorials offer suggestions on how to improve the students’ listening skills, and include advice about note taking and listening for the main idea and details. Academic style clarifies the type of language used in academic texts and classes with the goal of helping the students to improve their reading and writing skills. When grammar review is the focus of the tutorial, the instructor gives an overview of common grammatical features seen in academic writing, and teaches how to avoid grammatical errors often seen in the students’ work. A tutorial on discussion skills focuses on helping the students improve their general academic discussion skills by using common phrases used in discussions, and practicing academic discussions. All of these topics are covered in tutorials; however, the instructor should have a concrete tutorial goal in mind which is tailored to the needs of the students, and plan the learning goals and direction of the tutorial accordingly.

## How a Writing Tutorial Contributes to Students

Writing tutorials contribute in various ways to the students’ learning, the most important being that it is an important alternative to the traditional student-instructor relationship. Since student reflection is a necessary part of the learning experience, tutorials can be used to see how much the students have learned (Smyth, 2004). When speaking individually to the instructor, the students have the chance to make use of suggestions provided according to their needs. Although the students may know about the content, the instructor’s objective feedback sheds a new light on their writing. The students may think that they have made their point clearly and thoroughly, but the instructor explains how and why they have succeeded or failed, and shares strategies to improve their writing process. She makes sure that the students learn how to improve their essays, and learn writing techniques which they can then apply to their future assignments. Another important outcome of a writing tutorial is that, the students learn without the threat of judgment.

## Why Group Tutorials?

Having individual tutorials is frequently preferred by the instructors to give feedback for written tasks; however, this may take a long time depending on the number of students. The instructor prepares a scheduler for the students to make tutorial appointments in her non-teaching hours, which is another issue since her non-teaching hours may not be available for the students. The students have tight schedules and prefer having tutorials during the class hours. Considering that each tutorial lasts 15-20 minutes, and an instructor has approximately 60 students, allocating class time for tutorials means losing a great amount of teaching time. To handle this problem, Snowball and Sayigh (2007) suggest using the group tutorial system to improve the quality of feedback to students particularly in large classes.

## Advantages Of Group Tutorials

Having group tutorials in class has advantages for the students, and modern perspectives on learning suggest that collaboration among peers during learning may have strong positive effects on their acquisition of knowledge (Van der Linden et al., 2000). Working in a group involves mutual interaction and shared understanding of a problem (Dillenbourg et al., 1996). When they work in groups, the students develop team spirit, and they help their group mates as suggested by Slavin (1996). In other words, group tutorials produce cohesiveness, and the students feel closely united. An added advantage is that when the students are given the opportunity to interact, discuss and hear each other's viewpoints, they have the chance to develop intellectually (Slavin, 1996). Since education involves continuous intellectual activity, i.e. cognitive elaboration, students have this chance when they explain what they have written or what they think to each other, and link new information to their prior knowledge.

Finally, the students may sometimes have to miss another class to attend an individual tutorial, which is scheduled according to the free hours of the instructor, and which may clash with another course of the student. Having a group tutorial during class time avoids such a problem, as well.

## Instructor's Responsibility

During the tutorial, it is the instructor's responsibility to facilitate the students' learning process and stimulate their interaction. She should challenge the students to clarify their own ideas, and to question unclear and/or unknown topics. By doing so, she helps the students to organize their knowledge, and to discover and resolve the parts which they have not understood or misunderstood (Schmidt and Moust, 1998). In order to stimulate the students' collaboration in a group tutorial, the instructor manages interpersonal dynamics, she considers group development processes sensitively, and handles any possible interpersonal conflicts. She should be sensitive regarding the difficulties experienced by the students. It is theorized that both subject-matter expertise and interpersonal qualities (social

congruence) are the necessary conditions so that the students can improve their cognitive congruence (Dolmans, De Grave, Wolfhagen and Van Der Vleuten, 2005). Regarding the instructor's task in a group tutorial, Wilkerson (1994) has identified two factors: maintaining positive interactions within the group and providing assistance in getting the work of the group accomplished for the students in the group to learn. Parallel to that study, Dolmans, De Grave, Wolfhagen and Van Der Vleuten (2005) found three factors regarding the responsibilities of the instructor: guiding students through the learning process, content knowledge input and commitment to the group's learning.

During the tutorial, the instructor should make sure that the students are active and talk more than the instructor so that they can discover their weaknesses and learn from their peers. As a result of a study by Dolmans, De Grave, Wolfhagen, Van Der Vleuten (2005), it has been noted that students had positive perceptions about an instructor who stressed the learning process in a group tutorial and encouraged the students to talk.

### **Group Tutorial Procedures**

The following steps are used to have group tutorials: first the instructor reads all the written work (here essays will be considered), and gives detailed written feedback. During this process, she groups students who have made common mistakes or whose writing contains parts to be improved. After that, she highlights the mistakes or the parts to be improved if she has electronic copies of the essay. Then, she prepares a document with these parts and during the group tutorial, she projects this document on the screen, and asks the students to find out the mistakes in the document. The students work as a group to do this and after they find all the mistakes and weaknesses, they make suggestions about how to improve and/or correct the document. The instructor interferes when they cannot do this and teaches that item, after which the students work together again to improve the parts of the document. This process may take 30-50 minutes depending on the weaknesses of the papers, and both the number and language level of the students. As a final step of the group tutorial, each student gets her/his paper back and works on it till the end of the class hour during which the instructor walks around the class and helps the students. When the class time is over, the instructor gives the students one or two days to improve their papers and bring the final copy together with the draft(s).

This group tutorial process takes two class hours, and saves time and energy for the instructor. It is useful for the students as well, since they share their knowledge, support each other in dealing with their common writing problems, and learn something together with their friends of the same level during class time.

## Conclusion

A writing tutorial provides a different approach to instructor-student relationship since it is tailored according to the individual needs of the students. Group tutorials are preferred for a Freshman writing assignment when an instructor has more than 60 students, and insufficient time to allocate to each and every student. This case is the same with students who have approximately 30 class hours a week, and have difficulty in attending a tutorial in a time slot appropriate for the instructor. In a group tutorial, the students have the chance to collaborate with their peers, interact mutually, develop team spirit and develop intellectually. During the tutorial, the instructor stimulates the students' cooperation and learning. Having a positive interaction within the group, the students find out the topics which they have not learned in class, and actively practice them.

To prepare for a group tutorial, the instructor reads the student essays, gives feedback and creates a group of the students who have common problems. She notes down these problems, and during the tutorial, she asks the group to discover the mistakes or parts to be improved. After the students discuss among themselves, they make their suggestions, and the instructor teaches any item that has not been covered or corrected before the students leave to individually improve their essays. As a result, the students learn with their friends by giving and receiving honest and helpful feedback.



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# IMPROVING STUDENTS' MOTIVATION in ENG 101

Aida Ibricevic

## Introduction

This research study attempts to isolate and tackle the problem of demotivation of students who have previously experienced failure. The setting is ENG 101, a required one-semester, first-year English course with content-based instruction of academic reading and writing.

ENG 101 - FAILURE RATE					
YEAR	SEMESTER	Total number of enrolled students	PASS	FAIL	FAILURE RATE
2014	SPRING	483	302	181	37%
2013	FALL	716	402	314	44%
2013	SUMMER	88	73	15	17%
2013	SPRING	305	174	131	43%
2012	FALL	484	287	197	41%
2012	SUMMER	61	48	13	21%
2012	SPRING	198	120	78	39%
2011	FALL	294	208	86	29%
2011	SUMMER	42	27	15	36%
2011	SPRING	105	50	55	52%
2010	FALL	188	144	44	23%
2010	SUMMER	19	14	5	26%
2010	SPRING	89	54	35	39%
2009	FALL	113	81	32	28%
2009	SPRING	20	14	6	30%
2008	FALL	18	12	6	33%

As the table above shows, the number of ENG 101 failing students at Özyeğin University has grown consistently over the years. To answer the increasing need for a motivation-sensitive teaching approach, a set of tools, collectively referred to as the 'Motivation Project,' was added to the standard ENG 101 curriculum. Although assessment of project effectiveness followed a pre-experimental research design, the 'pilot results' indicated that the Motivation Project has had a considerably positive effect on motivation levels, and a lesser, but still positive influence on achievement levels.

## Motivation – Defining the Concept

The Latin verb *movere*, ‘to move’ gives a hint at the etymological meaning of the term motivation, but, as Dornyei & Ushioda (2001, 2011) point out, its full conceptual definition is much more complex and a clear consensus among scholars does not exist. Most researchers agree that motivation is related to the *direction* and *magnitude* of human behavior. In that sense, motivation provides the answers to three main questions:

Why one decides to do something?

How long are they willing to sustain the activity?

How hard are they going to pursue it?

(Dornyei & Ushioda, 2001, 2011; Williams & Burden, 1997)

In other words, when considering the agreed-upon elements of the definition, motivation is related to the *choice* of a particular action, the *persistence* with it and the *effort* expended on it (Dornyei & Ushioda, 2001, 2011).

Historically, there has also been considerable disagreement among scholars on whether motivation is the cause or the *effect* of learning. Some consensus has emerged in that there is a cyclical relationship between learning/achievement and motivation. The virtuous cycle of ‘high motivation->high achievement->high motivation’ is contrasted with the vicious cycle of ‘low motivation->low achievement->low motivation.’ Another alternative to the static comparison between these binary states is a focus on the motivational process, comprising different phases: initial planning and setting a goal, forming an intention, generating a task, implementing and controlling the action and evaluating the outcome (Dornyei & Ushioda, 2001, 2011). The conceptual understanding of motivation adopted by this research study lies somewhere between the static comparisons of positive and negative cycles and the dynamic process approach. It assumes that negative cycles are self-reinforcing and that a ‘motivation-sensitive’ teaching approach and a consciously designed set of ‘motivation-generating’ tools can and should be introduced into the course curriculum in order to sever the self-perpetuating negative cycles. At the same time, particular attention is paid to the motivational process keeping in mind that motivation fluctuates throughout the learning period.

Central to much of the surveyed literature on motivation and goal-setting is the notion that positive emotional experiences, over time, contribute to higher motivation and achievement (Csikszentmihalyi, 2009; Pajares, 2001). In that respect, generating positive emotional experiences, through achievement of small steps, leads to greater success in later stages of the learning process (Mega, Ronconi, & De Beni, 2014). Zimmerman, Bandura, & Martinez-Pons (1992) argue that self-efficacy, the belief in one’s own abilities to reach goals, is positively correlated with self-regulation, the process of students setting goals and monitoring, regulating and controlling their cognition, motivation and behavior. Cheung (2004) views goals as an effective motivational tool in developing the self-regulated and life-

long characteristics of the learning process and assigns teachers an important role in helping students adopt an appropriate perception of goal-setting. According to this author, goal-setting workshops are deemed particularly useful for providing support to students in putting goals in action. (Cheung, 2004) The way goals are defined within the surveyed literature is shaped by two concepts stemming from positive psychology: self-efficacy and self-regulation.

Wentzel (2000) views goals as ‘powerful motivators of behavior’ and defines them as: ‘cognitive representations of what it is that an individual is trying to achieve in a given situation’ (p. 106). She distinguishes between social relationship, task-related and cognitive goals, taking into account that goals can originate from either the learner or the context of learning. Ames (1992) understands goals to ‘define an integrated pattern of beliefs, attributions, and affect that produces the intention of behavior and that is represented by different ways of approaching, engaging in, and responding to achievement-type activities’ (p. 261). Seen from this perspective, goals can be either concerned with mastery or performance. Mastery goals place the greatest emphasis on effort and the ‘intrinsic value of learning,’ while performance goals focus on one’s ability and sense of self-worth. (Ames, 1992) Schunk (1990) looks at goals in broader terms as ‘what an individual is trying to accomplish’ (p.71) and emphasizes that when students feel that they are making progress toward the accomplishment of their goal, their self-efficacy increases and they are more likely to set more challenging goals in the future. What follows is a brief description of how the Motivation Project was implemented, while the actual materials used in class can be found in Appendix 1.

## **The Motivation Project – What Was Done in Class?**

The starting point for the Motivation Project was for students to identify the sources of their motivation. Students posted each project task on our class forum and were able to see each other’s work, comment and create online discussions.

## **Identifying Sources of Motivation – Twenty Reasons Task**

To complete this task, students were asked to write twenty reasons in response to the following question:

*I want to be successful in ENG 101 because.....*

Based on student responses to this task, a survey was designed to measure motivation levels listing activities pursuant to each source of motivation (see Appendix 2).

## SMART Goals

While the first project task attempted to answer *why* is it that students want to become successful in ENG, the following steps of the project presented a systematical operationalization of *effort* and *persistence*. In connection with the surveyed literature on goals and goal-setting, the SMART goals and learning journal (Appendix 1) were used to promote self-efficacy and self-regulation.

## SMART Goal-Setting Workshop

This part of the project was greatly aided by the GPS LifePlan Goal Setting Workshop (The Minnesota State Colleges and University System, 2012) and lesson plans written to accompany the presentation of SMART goals (Hayes, 2010; Dornbush, 2010).

## SMART Goal Rewrite Tutorials

After completing the first draft of individual SMART goals, a tutorial session was held with each student to clarify, revise and explain what each one of these dimensions (specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and timely) mean and how their SMART goals could be improved.

## Learning Journal Entries

Operationalization of the persistence of action, as the third component of motivation with added emphasis on self-efficacy and self-regulation, came in the form of a learning journal to track weekly progress made toward the accomplishment of the students' SMART goal. The learning journal used in this project was an adapted and modified version of a template (Council of Europe/Conseil de l'Europe, 2011) for students to:

- Identify a new learning target
- Reflect on the learning process and self-assessment
- Gain awareness of existing knowledge as basis for new learning

## The Motivation Project – Did it work?

The guiding research question for this part of the research study was whether introducing the Motivation Project tools had a positive impact on levels of motivation and academic achievement. The research design of the pilot phase was pre-experimental, primarily relying on a simple pre-test/post-test measurement method (Ferrance, 2000). The pilot phase did, however, concentrate on how the variables of achievement and motivation were constructed, measured and, most importantly, separated from each other. The clear distinction between achievement and motivation was made possible by written, objectively set, detailed criteria for assessment of course tasks. The criteria were reinforced on a weekly basis through departmental standardization sessions. Indicators of achievement were the grades that students received from assessed tasks, while indicators of motivation were various activities that students completed pursuant to their sources of motivation (see Appendix 2). As Babbie

(2007) emphasizes, pre-experimental research design does not produce highly reliable results and it is not advisable. Thus, data interpretation and analysis of the pilot phase is limited and is rather a precursor of a fully experimental future study.

### Survey and interviews – Summary of results

The thirteen repeating students, who voluntarily participated in the pilot phase reported in both survey and interviews that their motivation levels have approximately doubled as a result of the Motivation Project.

STUDENT	INTRINSIC MOTIVATION		EXTRINSIC MOTIVATION		TOTAL MOTIVATION		% Change in INT MOT	% Change in EXT MOT	%Change in TOT MOT
	FAILED	SUMMER 2014	FAILED	SUMMER 2014	FAILED	SUMMER 2014			
1	3.87	5.93	3.95	5.33	3.91	5.63	53.23	34.94	43.99
2	4.05	7.33	3.94	7	4.00	7.17	80.99	77.66	79.35
3	3.23	6.23	3.33	5.07	3.28	5.65	92.88	52.25	72.26
4	6.23	9.35	5.73	8.39	5.98	8.87	50.08	46.42	48.33
5	2.05	4.7	3.29	2.25	2.67	3.475	129.27	-31.61	30.15
6	3.055	7.22	3.11	5.03	3.0825	6.125	136.33	61.74	98.70
7	3.55	7.55	4.08	7.24	3.815	7.395	112.68	77.45	93.84
8	3	6.11	4.18	5.44	3.59	5.775	103.67	30.14	60.86
9	2.72	7.16	3	5.29	2.86	6.225	163.24	76.33	117.66
10	1	4.58	1	4.12	1	4.35	358.00	312.00	335.00
11	2.58	4.58	2.25	3.62	2.415	4.1	77.52	60.89	69.77
12	3.44	6.27	3.48	6.28	3.46	6.275	82.27	80.46	81.36
13	4.05	7.64	5.22	7.63	4.635	7.635	88.64	46.17	64.72
<b>AVERAGE</b>	<b>3.29</b>	<b>6.51</b>	<b>3.58</b>	<b>5.59</b>	<b>3.44</b>	<b>6.05</b>	<b>117.60</b>	<b>71.14</b>	<b>92.00</b>

The interview results, to a large extent, confirmed the anonymous survey. When students were asked about the effectiveness of the Motivation Project, these were some of their responses:

“It helped me because I could plan studying time for ENG 101. I used to be afraid that I would fail again, but my fear disappeared as I wrote my Learning Journal entries.”

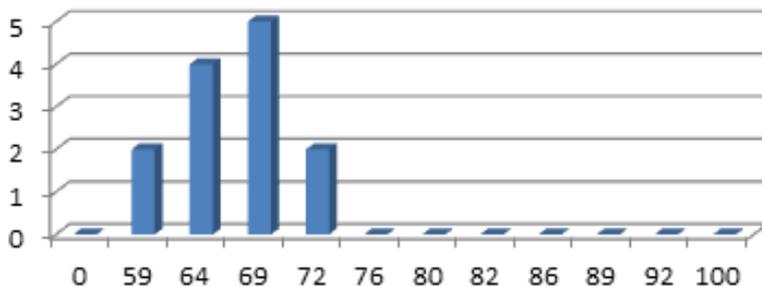
“Although I found the course challenging, thinking back to the twenty reasons helped me stay focused.”

“Effective because it made me think about my goal and the reasons why I need to be successful. It was also helpful to remember it each week, by keeping a learning journal.”

According to these *pilot results*, the Motivation Project was a success, as students were actively engaged in completing both the required course assignments and tasks of the Motivation Project and reported a near doubling of their efforts and perseverance. However, levels of achievement still lagged behind.

As far as academic achievement is concerned, at the end of the semester two students received an F two of them got a C-. There were four Ds and five D+s.

## Achievements



Considering that all thirteen students had a history of failing ENG 101, at least once, and in some cases five, six and even nine times, we could again see these achievement records as evidence of success. All in all, after completing the Motivation Project, eleven students received a conditionally passing grade, and hopefully severed the toxic ties of the 'low motivation->low achievement->low motivation' negative cycle. Further inquiry with an experimental research design, a control and an experimental group, needs to be conducted for more reliable, valid and conclusive results.

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## Appendix 1 – Motivation Project Tools

### SMART Goal Worksheet

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Write down your goal regarding **ENG 101** in as few words as possible.

My goal is to: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Make your goal detailed and **SPECIFIC**.

Answer who/what/where/how/when.

\_\_\_\_\_

**HOW** will you reach this goal? List at least **five steps** you plan to take:

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_

5. \_\_\_\_\_

Make your goal **MEASUREABLE**.

I will measure/track my goal by using the following numbers or methods:

\_\_\_\_\_

Make your goal **ATTAINABLE**. What additional resources do you need for success?

What is it that I need to achieve this goal:

\_\_\_\_\_

How will I find the time: \_\_\_\_\_

I need to learn more about: \_\_\_\_\_

People I can talk to for support: \_\_\_\_\_

Make your goal **RELEVANT**. List why you want to reach this goal (your twenty reasons):

Make your goal **TIMELY**.

Put a deadline on your goal and set some **benchmarks**.

## Learning Journal Entry

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

What did I learn during the past week? Make a list.

What action steps did I take during the past week to achieve my SMART goal?

How well did I achieve these action steps?

How could I improve? What could I do differently next time?

What have I learnt about myself and my learning process?

What is my next target towards the achievement of my SMART goal?

How do I plan to achieve my next target? List five action steps you plan to take?

## Appendix 2 – Motivation Project Assessment

August 18, 2014

This survey is conducted as part of a research study to better understand the motivation of students, who have previously failed ENG 101. You do not have to write your name on this survey, so please answer each question sincerely and carefully. The results of this survey will be used for research purposes only. Thank you very much for your cooperation.

Aida Ibricevic, UGE Program, Özyeğin University

### ENG 101 Student Motivation - Survey

#### Task A

For the first Motivation Project assignment you were asked to provide your ‘**Twenty Reasons**’, answers to the question: ‘**I would like to be successful in ENG 101 because.....**’

Do you think this assignment increased your motivation?

YES                      NO

Give examples and a short explanation of your answer.

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#### Task B

Give yourself a grade for **activities** that you completed for each item on the ‘Twenty Reasons’ list in **Summer 2014** and a grade for **activities** that you did in the semester when you **failed** ENG 101.

**Activities** can include tasks, projects, assignments and exercises. They can include any examples of action taken towards a particular achievement or any other evidence for a certain item.

Grade yourself honestly, from **1 (lowest)** to **10 (highest)**.

**Example 1:**

For some students, an important source of motivation for success in ENG 101 is 'getting a good job.'

4. Employment	Grade for activities in FAILED SEMESTER	Grade for activities in SUMMER 2014
a. Getting a god job	2	7

In this case, the numbers '2' and '7' are grades for a variety of activities that could include visits you made to the Career Center, discussions you had with family members about your job search or actual internship or job applications you prepared.

**Example 2:**

When completing the Twenty Reasons task, some of you said that one of the reasons why you want to be successful in ENG 101 is to 'make your parents proud.' For this item, remember any time you made your parents proud because of your ENG 101 success.

5. Family	Grade for activities in FAILED SEMESTER	Grade for activities in SUMMER 2014
a. Making parents proud	8	3

The numbers '8' or '3' may refer to the number of times your parents asked about your progress in ENG 101, praised you for your accomplishment and grades, expressed joy at your class engagement or encouraged you to do additional reading related to ENG 101.

1. Improving ENG 101 academic skills	Grade for activities in FAILED SEMESTER	Grade for activities in SUMMER 2014
a. Critical thinking		
b. Reading (course texts)		
c. Reading for leisure (books in English)		
d. Text analysis		
e. Quoting/Paraphrasing/Citation		
f. Effective use of the library		
g. Writing (general)		
h. Essay Writing		
i. Vocabulary		
j. Using dictionaries not 'Google Translate'		

k. Grammar		
l. Speaking		
<b>2. Learning about the ENG 101 content areas</b>	<b>Grade for activities in FAILED SEMESTER</b>	<b>Grade for activities in SUMMER 2014</b>
a. Sustainable Development		
b. Business Ethics		
c. Cultural Differences		
d. Consumerism		
e. Business and the Environment		
<b>3. Developing greater English language competence</b>	<b>Grade for activities in FAILED SEMESTER</b>	<b>Grade for activities in SUMMER 2014</b>
a. International communication		
b. Vacations abroad/Living abroad		
c. Watching TV programs and movies		
d. Understanding English speaking cultures		
<b>4. Employment</b>	<b>Grade for activities in FAILED SEMESTER</b>	<b>Grade for activities in SUMMER 2014</b>
a. Getting a god job		
b. Raising earning potential		
c. Having a better future career		
<b>5. Family</b>	<b>Grade for activities in FAILED SEMESTER</b>	<b>Grade for activities in SUMMER 2014</b>
a. Making parents proud		
b. International family business		
c. Communicating with US cousins		

6. Social	Grade for activities in FAILED SEMESTER	Grade for activities in SUMMER 2014
a. Friendship with foreign students		
b. Meeting new people		
c. Girlfriend/Boyfriend - Personal relations		
d. Assisting others in learning English		
7. Happiness-Mood-Emotional Wellbeing	Grade for activities in FAILED SEMESTER	Grade for activities in SUMMER 2014
a. Making myself happy/feeling better		
b. Feeling relaxed		
c. Making my teacher happy		
d. Experiencing success		
e. Feeling organized and planned		
f. Getting rid of a weakness		
g. Beating a fear or phobia		
h. Stop hating ENG 101		
i. Stop feeling scared to speak English		
8. Institutional	Grade for activities in FAILED SEMESTER	Grade for activities in SUMMER 2014
a. Being a 'good university student'		
b. Gaining necessary study skills		
c. Taking the TOEFL and GRE exams		
d. Participating in the Erasmus program		

**ENG 101 Student Motivation – Individual Interviews**

How many times have you failed ENG 101?	
When was the last time that you failed the course?	
What do you think are some of the reasons why you failed ENG 101?	
What is your perception of the “Motivation Project”? Did it help you to get motivated for ENG 101?	
Which parts of the project were most/least effective? Why?	
What suggestions do you have to increase students’ motivation for success in ENG 101?	

**MOTIVATION - INDICATORS**

Indicators of <b>FAILED semester motivation</b>	GRADE	Indicators of <b>SUMMER 2014 motivation</b>	GRADE
Attendance-class		Attendance-class	
Attendance-tutorials		Attendance-tutorials	
In-class participation		In-class participation	
Completing assignments on time		Completing assignments on time	
<b>Out of class activities</b>		<b>Out of class activities</b>	
Activity 1		Activity 1	
Activity 2		Activity 2	
Activity 3		Activity 3	
		Twenty Reasons Task	
		SMART goal - write	
		SMART goal - rewrite	
		Learning Journal Entry 1	
		Learning Journal Entry 2	
		Learning Journal Entry 3	
		Learning Journal Entry 4	
		Motivation Survey	
		Individual Interview	

ACHIEVEMENT - INDICATORS			
Indicators of <b>FAILED semester</b> achievement	GRADE	Indicators of <b>SUMMER 2014</b> achievement	GRADE
AT1		AT1	
AT2		AT2	
AT3-0		AT3-0	
AT3-1		AT3-1	
AT3-2		AT3-2	
AT4		AT4	
CPG		CPG	

# LYING, CHEATING or STEALING: PLAGIARISM, the ESSAY as GAME, and the MYTH of INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

Robin Turner

Plagiarism is a particularly pertinent topic for Freshman English teachers for two reasons. The first is obviously that we encounter a considerable amount of plagiarism (possibly more than other departments because of the emphasis on essay-writing); the second is that we are often expected to play a major role in initiating students into academic culture. In other words, we are expected to detect, discourage and punish plagiarism, but also to teach students what it is, why they shouldn't do it, and how they can avoid it. I intend to examine the latter role by questioning how as institutions and individuals we present plagiarism to our students. I shall argue that some of our thinking here is confused, and that this can sabotage our attempts to educate students about plagiarism.

## University Policies

To get an idea of the official view of plagiarism, I simply typed 'plagiarism policy' into a user-neutral search engine (Startpage). From the results, I kept those documents which were written by universities or departments and excluded those by individual instructors or people outside universities, such as essay mills and purveyors of plagiarism detection software. This left 89 documents. I analysed language in four categories:

1. General moral terms: honesty, integrity, conscientious, illegal, unethical, evil, excuse, commit, unprofessional, unfair, abusive, and their various word forms. I discounted terms that referred merely to breaking rules, such as misconduct, violation, offence.
2. Terms indicative of lying: lying, faking, counterfeit, deceive, fraud, falsely, misrepresenting, pass off, fob off.
3. Terms indicative of cheating: cheat, collusion.
4. Terms indicative of stealing and other property violation: stealing, borrowing, wrongfully taking material that is not our own, kidnapping, property, theft, appropriating.

All but five of the documents included words in at least one of these categories and around half contained general moral terms. Indications of a belief that plagiarism was lying came in 15 of them, and the view that it is cheating had the same number. 19 documents contained language indicating a view of plagiarism as having something to do with property rights.

## Plagiarism as Lying

Almost all the definitions of plagiarism endorsed the view of plagiarism as implying that an idea is your own when actually it originates elsewhere. This is obviously not entirely truthful, but whether it is always lying depends on the context and your definition of 'lie'. Linda Coleman and Paul Kay (1981, p. 28) famously came up with three 'prototypical' conditions for lying. Firstly the statement is false, since a true statement may dissemble or mislead but still would not normally be called a lie. Secondly, the speaker believes the statement to be false; this distinguishes lies from mere errors. Most importantly, the speaker intends to deceive the hearer. This is why no one would accuse Tolkien of lying because *The Lord of the Rings isn't true*.

These tie in fairly well with the conditions for a work to be regarded as prototypical plagiarism: the material must be unoriginal, the writer must believe that it is unoriginal, and the writer must intend to deceive the reader – that is, to convince the reader that the ideas or words are original. In a context where it is assumed that anything not cited is either an original idea or is common knowledge, then it is reasonable to assume that deliberately leaving material uncited is an attempt to deceive. If we accept Coleman and Kay's definition of 'lie' then most instances of plagiarism count as lying.

Coleman and Kay's conditions also help us deal with the tricky case of accidental plagiarism, which some regard as equally plagiaristic and others regard as a lesser kind of plagiarism or not really plagiarism at all. If the writer does not believe that their work is unoriginal, then one of the prototypical conditions for lying has not been met, and one of the features of prototypical plagiarism is also absent. This kind of borderline plagiarism is a common danger for academics as well as students, as it is all too easy to present findings we think are original only to find later that someone published something similar years ago. Conversely, the writer may know that the work is unoriginal but not intend that the reader think it is original. Consider the following hypothetical line:

As Shakespeare said, all the world's a stage.

Now the writer here should have put this quotation in quotation marks, but accusing them of plagiarism seems absurd because there was obviously no attempt to trick the reader into thinking that 'all the world's a stage' was their original and very clever paraphrase of Shakespeare's words. Nevertheless, according to many university plagiarism policies, this would indeed be classed as plagiarism. For example, The University of Colorado College of Letters, Arts, and Sciences (2006) states that 'plagiarism is a crime of extension, not of intention [...] plagiarism is committed, regardless of the student's intention or lack thereof and regardless of the student's knowledge or lack thereof.' It is not clear, though, why intention should be irrelevant in the case of plagiarism when it is important in many other crimes (e.g., murder).

Another tricky case is so-called self-plagiarism, which is mentioned in 7 of the documents, although in two of these cases it is counted as a separate offence distinct from plagiarism proper. If someone includes material from a previous work they wrote themselves, can this be classed as plagiarism? This would require a rewording of most definitions of plagiarism, since they explicitly refer to another's words or ideas. On the other hand, if we keep our focus on lying, then we can still accuse a writer of academic dishonesty if they copy their own work in a context where it is stated that the work should be completely original. Of course there are some academic contexts where this is not the case; we expect that often a thesis will be slimmed down and turned into a journal article, while a journal article may expand into a book, which may later be condensed into a TED talk. If some sentences stay the same in this process, no reasonable person would expect the writer to put them in quotation marks and cite the previous version of the text.

Another reason to present plagiarism as lying is psychological. Along with their three prototypical features of 'lie', Coleman and Kay mentioned 'typical' features, notably the idea that lying is 'reprehensible' (1981, pp. 37-38). Most cultures have a fuzzy space on the boundary of 'lie' reserved for non-reprehensible lies: in English they're called 'white lies', in Turkish, 'pink lies'. Lies told to benefit another or avoid harming them come into this category; conversely, lies told to benefit oneself move closer to the reprehensible centre of the lie category, and a lie told to benefit yourself while at the same time harming another person is the worst of all. Culpable plagiarism involves lying for one's own benefit, and we could also argue that it harms others by lowering the value of a grade or forcing students to submit to onerous plagiarism prevention measures. It may well be that the best way to discourage students from plagiarising is to make them not want to be the kind of person who plagiarises, and although all of us lie, no one likes to be thought of as a liar.

#### Plagiarism as Cheating

Another way of presenting plagiarism is as cheating.

Plagiarism is a form of cheating that occurs when students present as their own the ideas or work of others.

(Georgia Perimeter College)

Plagiarism is a form of cheating. More fully, Neville (2007) describes plagiarism as 'a practice that involves knowingly taking and using another person's work and claiming it, directly or indirectly, as your own'.

(North East Scotland College)

Plagiarism is seen here as an offence similar to falsifying lab results or sneaking a look at exam questions. In contrast, some universities have separate sections for plagiarism and cheating.

It is obvious that in the context of an essay where students are required to turn in original work, knowingly turning in unoriginal work constitutes cheating; however, that does not mean that all plagiarism is cheating, since it can also occur outside such a context. If I post someone else's words on my blog without attribution, I am plagiarising, but I am not cheating, since cheating implies breaking a rule, and no rule has been broken here, even if my intent is to deceive the reader.

Nevertheless, if a student commits prototypical plagiarism, as described earlier, it is a safe bet that this will be a form of cheating. The question is whether we should emphasise this aspect of plagiarism. There are some cases where it might be useful; for example, we may want to emphasise to a student that plagiarism is as serious an offence as cheating in an exam. On the other hand, presenting plagiarism as cheating comes with serious problems attached.

Firstly, cheating is something people do for their advantage; altruistic cheating is theoretically possible but so rare that we can ignore it. Presenting something as cheating therefore sends a strong message to students that it would be to their advantage to do it. No rational person would cheat on a placement test, because the purpose of the test is to place them in a class at the right level; winding up in a higher class would actually be to their disadvantage. However, given the same test but with elaborate procedures to prevent cheating – desks set far apart, mobile phones checked in at the door, and so forth – students would be tempted to cheat because the setting implies that they will try, which in turn implies that it is to their advantage to cheat.

A related problem is that an emphasis on cheating can turn the essay into a kind of game. After all, cheating is breaking rules, and rules are one of the defining features of a game. Of course not all rules are game rules (Suits, 1978, pp. 24-32) but game rules are perhaps prototypical cases of rules, and cheating in particular is associated with game rules: over half the search results on Google for 'cheat' included the words 'game', 'play' or 'match'. To say that not citing properly is cheating may put it on a level with a foul in football.

Most importantly, before we call something cheating, we need to be sure what our students' attitudes to cheating are. In a stereotypical nineteenth-century English public school, it may well have been effective to demonise plagiarism as cheating because the prevailing culture was that cheating was the mark of a cad and a rotter, and the game analogy actually reinforced this in a society where egregious behaviour was described as 'not cricket'. However, in many countries and institutions there is a culture of cheating which transforms cheating from something that spoils the game into a game in itself. For many students, cheating is simply part of the game of education, where the aim is to get through with a high score rather than to learn.

## Plagiarism as Stealing

The worst way to present plagiarism is as stealing or, put in more fashionable language, a violation of intellectual property rights. Here are a few examples (emphasis mine):

Plagiarism is when an author represents someone else's intellectual property as his or her own work. (Walden University Writing Center, 2014)

To steal and use (the ideas or writings of another) as one's own.

(The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language (1969) cited by Albany Law School)

to steal and pass off the ideas or words of another as one's own [...] to commit literary theft.

(Antioch University Midwest)

Note that the first part of the last definition is taken from Webster's Collegiate Dictionary without acknowledgement, so the plagiarism policy arguably contains plagiarism.

Sometimes the metaphors are even stronger:

At [Kentucky University] and most other universities, plagiarism is regarded as intellectual theft; faculty will rarely bother to determine whether you stole words on purpose or walked out of the shop having forgotten to pay.

(Royse, 2012, p. 1)

Students who take shortcuts and pretend that someone else's work is their own, shortchange not only themselves but also commit an academic crime [...] almost like selling a stolen laptop.

(Royse, 2012, p. 2).

Whether the stolen object is a candy bar or a car, a single paragraph or a whole essay, we are dealing with theft.

(Wrocław University, 2012, p. 3)

We should remember, though, that these are only metaphors. Plagiarism is not literally stealing, despite its oft-quoted etymology (from Latin *plagiare*, 'to steal'). The plagiarism-as-theft metaphor relies on the idea of intellectual property, which is both problematic in itself and not irrelevant to the question of plagiarism.

Prototypical plagiarism tends to involve intellectual property as collateral damage; the student copies something which is copyrighted. However, if a student copies a work in the public domain, then no violation of intellectual property rights has occurred. At the opposite end of the spectrum, if a student

pays someone to ghost-write their essay, there would be a good case for arguing that they own the intellectual property rights to that work. The metaphor of walking out of the shop without paying is particularly silly if the student has actually paid money for the essay! Certainly no ‘stealing’ has taken place in these two cases.

Even when the plagiarised material is copyrighted, though, there are reasons to be worried about the ‘theft’ idea because the very idea of intellectual property is problematic. This is a highly controversial area, but the basic argument against regarding ideas as property is that there is no object involved that can be transferred to another person, and thus an idea cannot be bought, sold or stolen. Copying someone’s ideas is not like stealing:

when we think of theft in the physical world, we are thinking of an act in which I might achieve possession of an object only by removing it from you. If I steal your horse, you can’t ride. With information, I can copy your software or data and leave the copy in your possession entirely unaltered.

(Barlow, in Taylor, 1999, p. 156)

For a long time we were able to pretend that creative works were commodities because they always had some kind of physical medium, so we could conflate the medium and the message. Although legislation was needed to discourage illicit copying, there was still a difference between the original and the copy. That all changed when the media went digital. A copy was indistinguishable from the original, and practically free to produce and distribute (National Research Council, 2000, pp. 28-32). But rather than seeing intellectual property as an increasingly defunct metaphor, publishers, creators and lawyers became more attached to it. Figure 1 shows the frequency of the phrase ‘intellectual property’ in books from 1800 to the present.

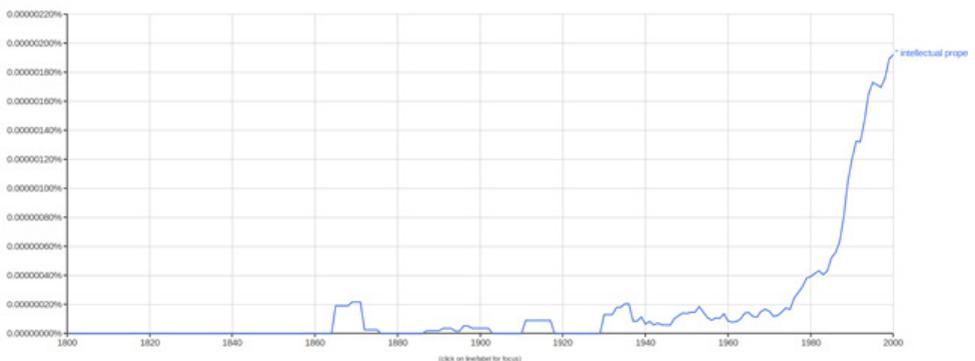


Figure 1: Google Ngram, “intellectual property”

However, talking about something a lot does not make it any more real; I would suggest that the frantic invocation of intellectual property rights is similar to the meteoric rise of the term 'family values' just as such values became increasingly irrelevant (Figure 2).



Figure 2: Google Ngram, "family values"

In other words, we are talking about intellectual property so much these days precisely because it is a problematic and possibly obsolete notion. Even if it has some validity, it has little force. It is silly to tell students that they shouldn't plagiarise because it is a violation of intellectual property rights when 'music piracy has become a normal, accepted practice' (Gartside & Heales, 2006, p. 45).

### Conclusion: A workable plagiarism policy

Plagiarism policies are generally drawn up by committees, and as such often bear out the old saw that a camel is a horse designed by a committee. To change such a policy may be more trouble than it is worth, and may even draw upon the would-be reformer accusations of being soft on plagiarism or failing to respect intellectual property, even though the definition of plagiarism has nothing to do with the penalties it carries, and intellectual property rights are the purvey of lawyers, not department committees. Fortunately, as teachers we can explain plagiarism to students how we like, while still enforcing university and departmental rules. I have argued that we should present plagiarism as lying, be very careful with talk of cheating, and never under any circumstances describe it as stealing. Moreover, we should not describe accidental plagiarism and self-plagiarism as real plagiarism. A good working definition would thus be:

Plagiarism is a form of lying that consists of the intentional presenting of the words or ideas of others as though they were one's own.

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# EFFECT of PEER-EDITING on EFL LEARNERS' WRITING ACCURACY

Shirin Abadikhah and Fariba Yasami

## Collaborative Writing

This study is based on the socio-cultural framework (Vygotsky, 1978) within which collaborative writing has been used to elucidate how social interaction assists the learning process (Wigglesworth & Storch, 2012). According to the sociocultural perspective, learners should engage in activities which promote interaction and co-construction of knowledge (Storch, 2005). The interaction which is shaped during working with peers on a task creates an optimal condition for learning (Cote, 2006). In addition, collaborative writing is based on several theoretical underpinnings including the rhetorical sense of audience, the psychological power of peer influence, the transfer-of-learning principle, and the principle of feedback (Gebhardt, 1980). Teachers of writing have to look for different ways to allow pairs of learners to provide emotional support during various stages of the writing process. According to Bruffee (1973), for several reasons students can help each other in learning to write. One reason is that they get awareness and support during the collaborative activity. Moreover, when students read their drafts to each other, the listeners may be able to identify problematic issues regarding lack of clarity, organization, and logic. This may help them to write clearly, coherently and logically. Another reason is that when students teach each other in a collaborative activity such as writing, they themselves learn how to write.

Nowadays, due to the rising number of English language learners, teachers' roles as the major collaborators with the students are being diminished by other learners' collaboration with their peers through socialization (Cote, 2006). As Donato (1994) stated, by collaborative work, language learners can provide the same chance for scaffolding as could be provided in expert-novice relationships in every day settings. The cognitive development of a novice increases in social interaction with a more capable member of the society who provides the novice with the appropriate degree of assistance called scaffolding (Storch, 2005). Several second language acquisition scholars have supported collaborative writing and peer feedback which would help revise and improve L2 writing. One benefit of peer editing is that it can raise students' awareness of audience considerations and develop analytical and critical reading and writing skills (Storch, 2005). However, if the students do not have any experience with peer collaboration, they will have to be trained (Cote, 2006). The current study examines the effects of peer-editing on the participants' accuracy gains during different stages of the study (pre-test, treatment and post-test).

## Significance of Peer-editing

According to Nelson and Carson (1998), peer editing sessions give the student writers a better sense of audience by receiving feedback from their fellow students on their initial drafts. As Lee (1997) stated, peer editing is a communicative process in which students write for real communication, not for the teacher and assessment purposes. As Lundstrom and Baker (2009) stated, peer-editing can help students develop different writing skills, such as how to discuss their writing with their peers effectively (Lee, 1997), writing for a real audience (Mangelsdorf, 1992), and getting to know ideas and views other than their own (Paulus, 1999). Unlike traditional classrooms in which writing is done privately and only the teacher provides feedback, peer review reverses such a technique. In this way, students still write individually, but after writing their first drafts, their fellow students read the drafts and put their comments on them and then students revise their drafts (Lee, 1997).

The effectiveness of peer-editing as a technique for L2 writing pedagogy is emphasized in the literature (Lee, 1997; Mangelsdorf, 1992; Nelson & Murphy, 1993; Paulus, 1999), particularly when learners are trained on how to edit their peers' drafts (Min, 2005). Peer-editing technique has been considered a beneficial activity which can be used in language classrooms by teachers who do not have enough time to provide assistance and feedback to all students. However, it is not clear how EFL learners can provide this assistance to each other in a writing course. The question is whether this assistance is helpful to both learners. Very few studies have empirically examined the possible benefit of peer-editing on editors' own writing accuracy especially in the EFL writing class. Therefore, the research questions to be investigated in this study are as follows:

1. Does peer-editing feedback have any effect on the accuracy of L2 writing?
2. How would peer-editing feedback influence the accuracy of producing target linguistic features during the treatment and post-test sessions?

## Method

The participants of this study included 45 freshman EFL students studying at a state university in Iran. They formed 15 pairs of learners, including editors (n=15) and receivers of editing (n=15) and a control group (n=15). The experimental groups were involved in four treatment sessions, during which they wrote two compositions. The editor group only provided peer-editing feedback without receiving any feedback from other students, teacher, or researchers while the second group received peer-editing feedback from the editors without doing any editing task. In the next session, the receivers were asked to revise their compositions based on their peer editors' comments and write a second draft. The student editors were also asked to self-edit their own drafts and compose a second draft (for a detailed description of the procedure, refer to Abadikhah & Yasami, 2014). In order to determine the effectiveness of the treatments on their writing accuracy, all participants were asked to write a composition prior to and after the treatment sessions. The accuracy of the written compositions was calculated using errors per 100 words (Mehmet, 1998; cited in Ellis and Barkhuizen, 2005).

## Findings

A one-way ANOVA comparing the pre-test scores indicated no significant difference among the three groups of participants. Next, two paired samples t-tests were run to compare the mean scores of participants in the experimental groups from pre-test to post-test. The results indicated a significant difference in the mean scores of the editors ( $df=14$ ;  $t=4.94$ ;  $p=.000$ ) and receivers of editing ( $df=14$ ;  $t=11.08$ ;  $p=.000$ ) from pre-test to post-test. This means that the participants made significantly fewer errors in their post-test composition compared to their pre-test. A comparison of the gain scores of the three groups indicated a significant difference between the experimental and control group ( $p<.05$ ). To further scrutinize the participants' performance, their mean error percentages on ten linguistic features during the four sessions were calculated (Table 1). As displayed in Table 1, the editor students showed a steady decrease in the total error rate from the pre-test towards the treatments and post-test sessions. Out of ten linguistic features targeted in the study, five features, namely, capitalization, spelling, verb tense, word formation, and plural/singular showed considerable decrease in errors from session 1 to session 4.

*Table 1 Mean error rate of editors (n=15) in 10 linguistic features during 4 sessions*

Linguistic features	Pre-test	Treatment 1	Treatment 2	Post-test
Capitalization	4.4	4.33	3.2	3.0*
Punctuation	5.87	5.0	5.4	4.0
Spelling	3.9	3.5	3.47	2.67*
Word formation	4.07	2.3	1.64	3.27*
Subject-verb agree.	4.2	5.5	4.87	3.0
Verb tense	5.33	3.9	3.7	3.2*
Wrong word	6.0	4.33	3.2	2.87
Word order	6.7	4.0	5.2	4.13
Plural/Singular	4.47	2.8	1.66	1.47*
Conjunction	5.27	6.0	4.19	3.22
<i>Total</i>	<i>50.21</i>	<i>41.66</i>	<i>36.53</i>	<i>30.83</i>

A comparison of the mean percentage of errors in these five features (capitalization, spelling, verb tense, word formation, and plural/singular) through paired samples t-tests confirmed significant differences between pre-test and post-test means ( $p<.05$ ). The rest of the features showed either fluctuations in error rate (e.g. word order) or steady decrease in the rate of errors from treatment 1 towards the post-test (e.g. conjunction). However, a comparison of the total error rate in the four sessions generally shows a significant decrease in the error rate. Table 2 presents the error rates concerning the students who received editing feedback from their peers.

Linguistic features	Pre-test (%)	Treatment 1 (%)	Treatment 2 (%)	Post-test (%)
Capitalization	5.47	4.06	3.13	3.07*
Punctuation	5.5	6.0	4.4	4.2
Spelling	4.4	3.5	2.87	2.2*
Word formation	5.93	4.96	5.5	3.13
Subject-verb agree.	4.4	4.0	3.93	3.30*
Verb tense	6.07	4.9	4.53	3.27*
Wrong word	5.7	5.33	4.83	4.73*
Word order	7.8	5.2	4.6	3.67*
Plural/Singular	6.6	5.2	4.6	3.56*
Conjunction	4.27	5.63	4.25	3.0
<i>Total</i>	<i>56.14</i>	<i>48.78</i>	<i>42.34</i>	<i>34.13</i>

We can see that out of ten selected linguistic features under study, capitalization, spelling, subject-verb agreement, verb tense, wrong word, word order and plural/singular showed a steady decrease in the percentage of error rate from the pre-test through the treatments and the post-test. Conducting paired samples, t-tests on the seven linguistic features indicated significant differences between the pre-test and post-test error rates ( $p < .05$ ). The four remaining features, 'punctuation' and 'conjunction' showed an increase in error rates from pre-test to treatment 1. However, a further look at the data revealed a steady decrease in error rate from treatment 1 to the post-test. Only one linguistic feature, 'word formation', showed fluctuations in the error rate from the pre-test to the post-test.

## Conclusion

The analysis of data indicated that both pair members in the experimental group generally made significant improvements from pre-test to post-test. This study has some implications for both teachers and learners. As mentioned by Rollinson (2005), written corrective feedback gives both learners and teachers more time for collaboration, consideration, and reflection than is possible through oral feedback. Giving students time and opportunity to critically read and edit one another's writing drafts makes them more critical of their own writing, and ultimately more responsible writers. Furthermore, overworked teachers who do not have enough time to provide individual feedback to all students can reduce their burden by giving peers the chance to provide each other feedback.

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# SEEING THINGS CRITICALLY, an ACTION RESEARCH

Mine Bellikli and Hatice Yurdakul

## Introduction

The purpose of our action research is to see how much we can improve the critical reading skills of our students in one semester. In the Turkish education system, students are taught to view their teachers as an authority and a font of knowledge in the classroom, and they perceive lessons as something to be learnt without questioning, understanding or knowing exactly why these are being taught. We believe that university is the place where students should be able to question texts, discover hidden messages and find out how the information in the text accords with their opinions, values and objectives. In short, university is the place to improve critical reading skills. We felt that one of the most important aims of teachers is to enable students to realize the importance of “Seeing things critically” and to improve their critical reading skills. In order to reach this aim, we carried out an action research composed of implementation of various activities integrated into our classroom materials, examination and analysis of the data collected during the summer semester at Atılım University. We would like to share our findings in this action research report.

## Literature Review

“Believe what you like, but don't believe everything you read without questioning it.”

Pauline Baynes *Questionable Creatures: A Bestiary*

Without doubt, university is the place where students learn how to turn into professionals in the specific areas they choose, which makes this period of life extremely crucial. Our education system in a way spoon-feeds our students till they join university. They rarely find their own ways out, or draw conclusions and this inability to do so affects their whole life. We believe that students must know how to communicate effectively in order to attain certain levels of success in their fields of study. We want them to be questioning individuals, ready to analyze, synthesize and apply what is given to them. In short, we want them to be critical in each and every aspect of communication skills.

In academic life, it is certain that reading is the core skill to improve communication. When we say “critical reading”, we mean the art of analyzing and evaluating a text and thinking with a view to improving the nature of thought (Paul & Elder, 2008, as cited in Shokrolakhi, 2014). Thistlewaite says that in critical reading, the reader is given the right to evaluate and to be decisive (Thistlewaite, 1990 as cited in Shokrolakhi, 2014) and the reader is not supposed to accept what is presented in the text without questioning it (Wallace, 1990 as cited in Shokrolakhi, 2014). The critical reading skill enables students to have doubts and not to ‘passively accept what is found in reading texts simply because it is so often presented as obvious’ (Wallace, 1990, p.44 as cited in Shokrolakhi, 2014). On the contrary, the reader is the judge to decide about what they read. It is the teachers’ responsibility to guide

learners on how to pass judgment about what they read and become critical readers (Edelsky, 1999 as cited in Shokrolakhi, 2014).

Having this theoretical framework in mind, we decided to carry out this action research. Our hypothesis was ‘Can we improve our students’ critical reading skills by adding critical reading activities to our current classroom materials?’

## The Study

We teach in the Department of Foreign Languages at Atilim University in Istanbul. We decided to conduct this study for students of Eng 102 English Communication Skills II during the summer semester. Students take this course after they pass Eng 101 English Communication Skills, which is a prerequisite for Eng 102. In this course, our aim is to equip our students with basic communication skills in English, familiarize them with test techniques and help them to follow their studies. Each one of us had a class composed of 15 students, making 30 in total, of which 28 were male and 2 female. From these 30 students, 27 of the students returned the pre and post tests making a 90 % of participation. Among these 30 students, 19 had taken this course before and the rest – 11 – were taking it for the first time. We conducted this action research in a limited, intensive 7 weeks. After explaining the syllabus and purpose of the course, we gave a pre-test with some critical reading questions, to get a picture of their current critical reading skills. We explained that this only had diagnostic value and would not have any effect on their grades, adding that we were planning to do research on improving their critical reading skills and strategies. We also informed our students that we would share our findings within the department and at a conference and got their permissions.

Although there are many types of questions to improve critical reading skills, we only focused on inference, tone of attitude and context meaning questions. We know that up, to this level, most of our students had worked on non-critical reading activities such as making sense of a sequence of thoughts, understanding the information, and getting the general gist of texts.

In this research, we aimed to carry our students one step further in identifying values and assumptions throughout our discussions, and to use these elements for interpretation and assertion of the underlying meaning of a text as a whole.

During the semester we kept repeating these three types of aforementioned questions almost for every reading text in the classroom. In order to collect data, we recorded class discussions. To arouse the interest of students we played guessing games in groups and asked students ‘Where are the texts taken from?’ or ‘To whom is the author writing?’ The first respondent won an ice-cream. To emphasize the tone or attitude of the text, questions like ‘What is the purpose of the author? Which of the author’s statements are facts? Which of them are opinions?’ were asked both in discussions and homework from time to time. Additionally, we asked our students to prepare an article review presentation that included at least five similar type of questions and answers in it. Throughout the study, we observed

and made notes on parts that students found difficult and tried to guide them with more questions of a similar nature to make their work easier. In addition, a quiz and a mid-term that covered critical reading questions were administered to gather data. We kept a record of each student's studies.

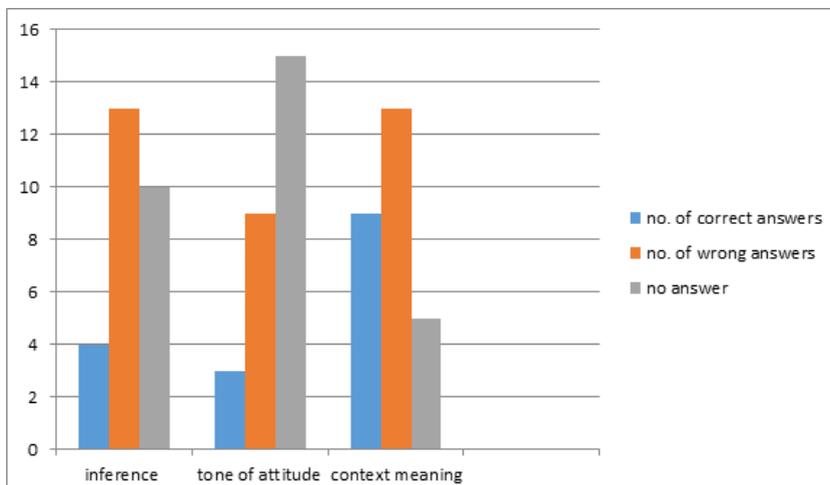
Due to the nature of the study, we preferred to use qualitative data gathering methods to assess the outcomes. We used three major research instruments: pretest-posttest, recording the discussions and interviews.

## Results

While working with our students during the study, both of us as their teachers observed that students exhibited great hesitation in answering any kind of critical reading questions both orally (in discussions) and in readings (they didn't even try to answer some of the questions in the pre-test) On the other hand they seemed more confident in answering non-critical questions.

As seen in Table 1 below, students have a relatively high percentage of wrong and no answers at the pre-test stage which we utilized to diagnose their needs. Participation in the test was high.

Table 1. Results of Pre-test

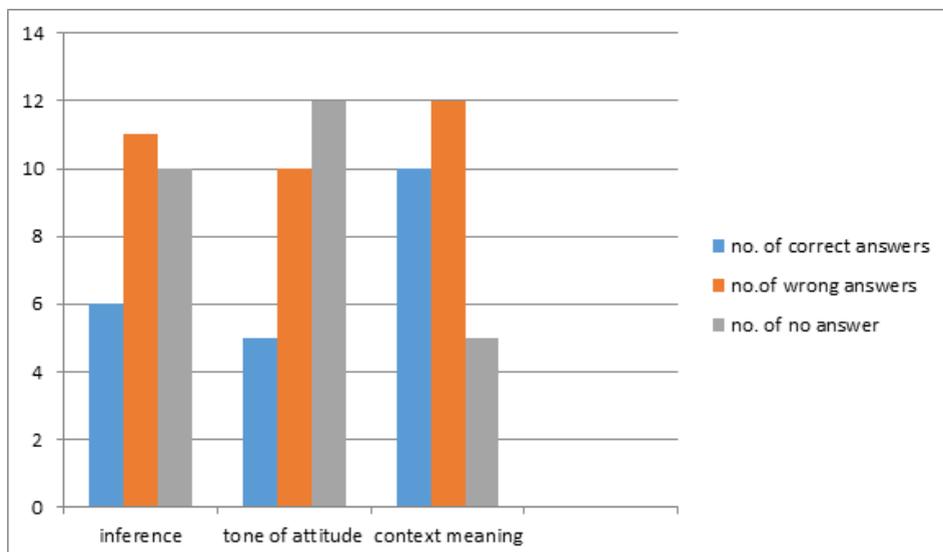


The data gathered from the diagnostic test led us to bring easier materials into class and to encourage them to participate more in the activities. The different materials seemed to work. Students who attended the class regularly enhanced their participation when the subject was the critical reading issue in the class discussions.

After we administered the pre-test, we had interviews with students to have a more enlightening insight into our students' needs. During the first interview, they said 'The questions are easy, I have no problem with understanding the questions but I had never analyzed or looked at any text from that point of view'. 'Changing the thinking style and looking at things from a different point of view makes me feel uneasy'.

Once we had this feedback, we designed our lessons in such a way that, students faced and practiced more critical reading questions. To be in line with our hypothesis at the beginning of our study, we added more question types which students felt uncomfortable with while answering. At the end of the semester, we administered our second test to estimate to what extent we had achieved our objectives. The results of the post test are shown below in Table 2.

Table 2. Results of Post-test



After the administration of the post test, we had a second interview with our students to get their reflections about their experience they had gone through. They said that, doing some exercises in class regarding critical reading questions had acquainted them with the question style, and added that the more they practiced, the less they feared the questions.

## Discussion

This study has several positive features, including a 90% return rate of pre-post tests. Also, there is a clear consistency between the findings of pre-post test, evaluation instrument and the recordings of discussions. Another positive feature is that we had not conducted an action research project before, so we had to spend fruitful time reviewing the literature. There are many articles and books on action research, so it was a bit confusing at the beginning of the study. However, being inexperienced in this subject became an advantage in that we were not biased from our previous experiences and we were able to carry out our research more objectively. In addition to these, the idea of using various materials as supplementary to the coursebook and getting students' opinions with interviews was valuable when considering the students who are the beneficiaries of any improvement.

When we compare pre- test results with post test results, the items regarding critical reading questions, almost no significant differences were identified in this research. The significant improvement is in the change in the number of no answers. We can deduce from these results that when practiced more in the classroom environment, students at least attempt to answer critical reading questions rather than leaving them untouched. It may not be wrong to predict that students will probably show more improvement during fall, or spring semesters.

## Limitations

The classroom action research project presented in this paper was limited to only two summer school classes. Using various materials to enhance students' motivation and attempting to solve their problem can be considered successful, particularly in light of the evaluation results and class participation.

Another limitation is our sample size. We had only 27 students and this is a very limited sample to reach any firm conclusion. Additional evidence such as implementing the same materials in different classes, having other teachers to observe the classes or inspect the material in order to triangulate the data did not occur.

As researchers and educators, we would like to continue this action research with some amendments and collect more reliable and valid data by incorporating quantitative methods as well.

## Suggestions

In order to achieve more reliable results and draw more reliable conclusions, more research with larger groups should be conducted. It would be interesting to extend this study to different group of students with the participation of more teachers.

One semester, especially a summer semester is a very limited period of time; therefore, this action research project should be carried out at least over two more semesters to see the impact from a broader view more clearly.

Overall, this study reveals that action research is a useful and empowering problem-solving tool that promotes improved confidence in one's teaching practice

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# ADJUSTING WRITTEN FEEDBACK on STUDENT WRITING to OPTIMIZE STUDENT UPTAKE

Filiz Etiz and Çiğdem Mekik

## Background to the Study

The importance, or even necessity, of giving feedback in foreign language learning has long been debated by scholars. Despite the fact that there are some scholars who have previously posited that giving feedback is not necessary in language learning, an overwhelming majority has strongly argued for providing feedback. In this vein, Gagné (1985) and Gagné et al. (1992) define feedback as “an external learning condition to improve the effectiveness of learning” and have pointed out the importance of feedback for one’s learning, respectively. In addition to providing feedback to students, Brookhart (2008) puts emphasis on the “just-in-time matching” of feedback, i.e. providing feedback to each student tailor-made for that particular instance and individual.

Students in the foreign language classroom value teacher feedback and attach great importance to writing accuracy (Ferris & Roberts, 2001; Lee, 1997). Research reveals that indirect feedback rather than direct feedback where mistakes are corrected prove to be more beneficial for students (Ferris & Roberts, 2001). Feedback comes in three basic types: (i) direct feedback where the feedback is tailor-made for the student and correct versions are provided, (ii) indirect feedback where especially language errors are highlighted usually by the use of symbols, and (iii) dialogic feedback where the teacher engages the student by posing questions (O’Sullivan & Paynter, 2013).

The present study was inspired by a 2013 doctoral study carried out by one of our colleagues at the Department of Modern Languages, Gökçe Vanlı. The focus of her study was on student and teacher perceptions on feedback to student writing. At the end of her study, she points to the need to “analyze what goes on during the revision process” in order to “have a better understanding of how the students revise” as well as to the need to “shed more light on the issue of how much of a teacher’s feedback the students consider”. These suggestions for further study served as the starting point for the current study.

## The context:

The study was conducted at the Department of Modern Languages at Middle East Technical University. The aim was to evaluate to what extent teacher feedback to students’ essay rough drafts were taken into consideration in the final draft. The essays were written in the Freshman English Courses, Eng 101 and Eng 102, during the Spring and Summer Terms of the 2013-2014 Academic year.

Eng 101 and Eng 102 are integrated skills courses where the writing component aims to develop

students' essay writing skills through the process approach. In Eng 101, students write two graded paragraphs and an undocumented expository essay worth 15 points where instructor feedback is given to the outline and rough draft, and the process counts for 2.5 of the total. The final exam includes a component where students are expected to write a reaction-response paragraph in response to one of two quotes provided. This component is worth 5 points.

In Eng 102, students are expected to write a documented argumentative essay worth 20 points (Process = 5 pts.). Instructors give feedback for outlines (first without and the second with sources incorporated), and rough draft during the process. In addition, in the final exam, students are expected to write the body of a documented argumentative essay, incorporating information from the sources provided. The essay writing component in the final exam is worth 15 points.

### **The Participants:**

Instructors who participated are on average 35 years old, with 10 years experience teaching these writing courses on average.

As sections in these freshman courses are no longer specific to a single department, students come from a variety of departments. Student proficiency level is assumed to be Upper Intermediate (B2). For the study, in each category - poor, average, good, respectively - 10 students' essays (rough and final drafts) were collected.

### **Research Questions:**

We aimed to answer the following research questions:

- What type of feedback (FB) for content, organization and language is preferred by the teacher?
- To what extent do students take into account FB on content, organization and language?
- What is the relationship between student language proficiency and FB uptake?

### **Data Collection:**

Samples were collected from 10 teachers who volunteered anonymously to share the rough and final drafts of 3 students (poor, average, good) and including their written feedback. Instructors were also asked to fill out a questionnaire specifying their experience teaching the course, the type of feedback given and whether any other writing tasks were done prior to the essay.

Information from the instructor questionnaires were recorded in an excel spreadsheet. The information includes instructor age, years of teaching experience, years of experience teaching a writing course, type of feedback given to the essay (whole class, face-to-face, written, other), whether any other prior writing task was given and the type of feedback given.

Instructor feedback types for content, organization and language were recorded separately for each student. Then, the extent of uptake in the final draft for each category was noted for each. Finally, the patterns emerging from the data in each category (content, organization, language) and each proficiency level were interpreted on a table (see Table 1 in the Appendix).

## Results

Analysis of instructor answers to the questionnaire revealed that all instructors give written feedback and that most prefer to use a combination of the above mentioned types of written feedback (e.g. direct, indirect, dialogic). However, our analysis of student papers revealed minimal use of constructive and even less use of positive feedback in general.

Students at all proficiency levels responded to written feedback but to varying degrees. Even students with poor proficiency attempted to revise their essays in some way.

Student uptake of written feedback varies significantly according to proficiency levels. For the most part, the higher the level of proficiency of the student is, the better the uptake is. This is expected since proficiency in L2 also entails familiarity with writing conventions and experience reading, writing and revising as well as facility in understanding instructor comments and language skills.

Teacher feedback to Content varied in type: comments indicating errors, suggestions, positive comments and questions. Among the “good” students, 5 students didn’t need revision. Students at all levels attempted revision. Uptake improved with increase in proficiency level.

Teacher feedback to Organization varied in type to a lesser extent: mostly error indication, suggestions all of which were considered to a large extent by students with higher proficiency levels but most students with “good” proficiency did not need to make major changes in organization.

Language feedback was given to all levels of students and the uptake tends to be higher as the level of proficiency increases.

## Conclusions

Taking into consideration the results as displayed in Table 1, several conclusions can be made regarding this study: For one, it is evident that students at all proficiency levels tend to respond to feedback to a large extent. However, the uptake of feedback varies and seems to be in direct correlation with

proficiency levels. In other words, the higher the proficiency level of students, the higher their uptake of feedback. This may be either due to more proficient students' higher frequency of writing skills practice earlier or to their better understanding of and insight into the L2 language mentality and thinking patterns as opposed to less proficient students' less engagement with L2 (writing) beforehand, or perhaps due to both factors. Another conclusion that may be drawn from this study is the fact that a large majority of instructors prefer to provide merely written feedback in different types rather than combining it with face-to-face and whole-class oral feedback. One reason why this may be so can be attributed to lack of time and high number of students to deal with in one semester. One other conclusion that can be reached in this study is about instructors' employment of positive and constructive feedback. Apart from few positive remarks on especially more proficient students' writing, the use of such feedback appears to be minimal for the essays. Again, this may be due to lack of time and having to cope with large numbers of students every semester.

## Suggestions

In the light of the conclusions made in this study, the following suggestions can be made:

- (i) Instructors should provide regular feedback for all writing tasks throughout the semester, and the feedback provided for students should be varied and should come in as whole class and face-to-face (oral) in combination with written feedback to optimize student uptake.
- (ii) It is evident that there is a strong relationship between student proficiency level and student uptake of feedback. Therefore, rigorous effort should be made both on the part of the instructor and the student to raise overall proficiency levels of students.
- (iii) More constructive feedback in the form of suggestions should be provided for student writing in order to guide and encourage the student. In addition to constructive feedback, positive feedback pointing to the strong points in student writing should not be disregarded since such feedback is likely to increase student confidence in writing and give the student a sense of achievement even at early stages of academic writing.

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## APPENDIX

Table 1

<b>Teachers' FB on Essays</b>	<b>Students 1 (poor)</b>	<b>Students 2 (average)</b>
<p><b>CONTENT:</b> Comments on the side or at the end of the essay in the form of asking questions and occasionally making suggestions</p>	<p>Students with a low level of English usually tend to disregard the FB related to content and hardly make any changes in the 2nd draft of their essay</p>	<p>Students with an average level of English tend to be selective in considering FB, which may be due to lack of comprehension of FB or lack of the skills</p>
<p><b>ORGANISATION:</b> Comments on the side or at the end of the essay in the form of asking questions and occasionally making suggestions</p>	<p>Students with a low level of English tend to take the FB comments related to organization into consideration to some extent, but there are many instances when they fail to do so</p>	<p>Students with an average level of English mostly take the FB into consideration, but still have trouble correcting mistakes which may be partly due to the differences in the thinking patterns between L1 and L2 as well as poor writing skills in L1</p>
<p><b>LANGUAGE :</b> Underlining phrases or sentence(s) indicating errors with symbols – making a few corrections on essay</p>	<p>Only half of the students with a low level of English seem to hardly take any of the FB into consideration</p>	<p>Students with an average level of English mostly consider the FB given and correct successfully to a large extent</p>

Adjusting Written Feedback on Student Writing to Optimize Student Uptake – Filiz Etiz & Çiğdem Mekik

## TAKING IT ONE STEP FURTHER: STUDENT WRITING in the DIGITAL AGE

**Burcu Gürkan**

What we call Digital Humanities today was a renaming of the field of Humanities Computing which has been around since the late 1940s when Fr. Roberto Busa compiled a concordance to the works of St. Thomas Aquinas called the Index Thomasticus (Hockey, 2004). The term Digital Humanities (DH) has become a somewhat contentious issue, and this controversy ranges from how to define it, to its revolutionary drive, to its purported purpose of reinventing the humanities as a field of scholarly investigation (Ramsey, 2013).

Matthew G. Kirschenbaum (2010) gives us a preliminary definition found on Wikipedia:

The digital humanities, also known as humanities computing, is a field of study, research, teaching, and invention concerned with the intersection of computing and the disciplines of the humanities. It is methodological by nature and interdisciplinary in scope. It involves investigation, analysis, synthesis and presentation of information in electronic form. It studies how these media affect the disciplines in which they are used, and what these disciplines have to contribute to our knowledge of computing.

As he notes, and I am inclined to agree, this is a fairly good summation especially given the nature of the subject: the digital humanities and the fact that a cursory glance at the editors of the definition reveals they are those who have been most active in the field. The ensuing four years since Kirschenbaum used that definition however has caused some of the details to have changed. There is more of an emphasis now on the praxis of DH and the community-oriented nature of DH endeavors.

What I am most concerned with here, however, is the use of digital technologies within the classroom to further students' scholarly abilities in critical thinking, research and writing. Digital technologies like the internet have become ubiquitous and, in many ways, indispensable. Most students today have no recollection of, nor access to, analog technologies such as the card catalogue. As such, we need to integrate more inclusively these technologies into our classrooms and curricula more efficiently.

In the spring of 2014, I spearheaded a pilot project in the Freshman English program to use more digital technology in the classroom. My goals were as follows: 1) integrate more use of digital technologies into the classroom for better writing outcomes; 2) using technologies that the students were familiar with in a new way; 3) pique their interest in materials that were sometimes dense theoretically; 4) get immediate feedback on their level of comprehension of these materials. Given the results of the project as applied, goals 1, 2, and 4 seem to have been satisfied. The third goal, as we will see, has some mixed results.

## Same Technology, New Uses

Given the smaller scope of the project, I concentrated mostly on using Socrative.com as an immediate feedback system which also allowed the students to do more in class writing with reference to the materials we were studying. Socrative, in its simplest form, is a free online student response system that utilizes internet technologies to enable the instructor to interact with students by building assessments and see those results in real time in the classroom. Similar in many ways to clicker-response systems used in larger classes, it has the added benefit of including short answer questions for those who wish to use this option. Moreover, it also sends reports on the activities used in class in a spreadsheet format which becomes useful for overall assessments at the end of the course. (It should be noted that Socrative currently only supports rooms of 50 students).

The interface is user-friendly and simple to set up: the instructor logs on with a free account and is assigned a room number. The students simply go to Socrative's page and begin the assignment by logging in to the room number with no need to download any programs.

I initially gave the students a questionnaire on their everyday use of internet/digital technologies. Many were confused about the term digital technology: I surmise that the use of digital technology was so normalized for them that naming it seemed strange to them. The advantage to a system like Socrative is that it allows instructor feedback in situations like this, such that I was able to define the term digital technology for them as they were doing the activity. Students mostly claimed that they spent either 1-2 hrs/day or 3-5 hrs/day on the internet and used it mostly to watch movies/tv, listen to music, and use social media. Interestingly, in one of my sections for the summer class the students were overwhelmingly in the 3-5 hrs or more than 5 hrs/day option.

It should be noted that almost all materials for our Freshman Core Classes, other than novels, are uploaded to LMS. We also track and enter attendance and grades through the same system. In addition, instructors will sometimes use short clips from YouTube (or when unavailable, other media platforms like Dailymotion) to illustrate points/issues or integrate spoken material (like Martin Luther King, Jr.'s speeches). The difference here is that using video, unlike platforms like Socrative, is often unidirectional and lacking in real interaction. My overriding concern (and desire) is that technologies, as they are used in the classroom, ought to engage the students in productive and useful ways for our educational outcomes. In this, I have also utilized the technique of having students write short summaries of sections of the texts they are assigned in class, email me those summaries and then project them onto the board so that we, as a class, read over the summaries and make corrections to their writing – a guided peer-editing project with the whole class, so to speak.

One of the problematic aspects of this method, however, is that our students' levels of English can vary greatly in any given class: there are those for whom English is their native language to those who still struggle with using the language. Thus, even though I anonymize their summaries when they are

projected onto the board, I feel that there might still be some reluctance to fully engage from those students for whom the language is still a struggle. However, the ability to anonymize students' work and interact as a group in the classroom, while not perfect, is a significant improvement in terms of engaging the students in the material.

## Using Digital Technologies: More Opportunities for Better Results

What I found most interesting and useful is what Socrative terms an Exit Ticket. It allows students to explain in their own words whatever was the most important point they learned in class that day, as well as note whether they needed further help in understanding the material. This allows the instructor to look over the responses for the next class to help students revisit those points that they found confusing or too difficult. It also means that when students know that they will be asked to formulate a response to the question 'What did you learn today?' they tend to look more holistically at the class overall, and try to come up with a 1-2 sentence answer to that question. The Exit Ticket format starts by asking the student's name and then has 2 questions already included. The first question asks 'How well did you understand today's material?' and offers the student 4 options:

- A. Totally got it
- B. Pretty well
- C. Not very well
- D. Not at all

The second question asks 'What did you learn in today's class?' with a short answer option. For each section in which I used the Exit Ticket, I also included a text-specific question they were asked to answer in 2-3 sentences. For instance, for our section on John Berger's *Ways of Seeing*, I included the question: 'John Berger says 'We only see what we look at.' Briefly explain what you think this means.' The responses to this question were varied, from 'idk' to answers like:

"We only see what we look at." is multi-dimensional. We can break this statement into two: those things we simply don't see because we don't actually physically look at them and those things which we don't see, i.e. don't (sic) notice even if we might be looking them straight in the eye, because we consciously or unconsciously, choose not to.

In the case of the later (sic), sometimes it is our thoughts or feelings, i.e. prejudice, pre-conceived notions, anger, sadness, etc. that might actually prevent us from seeing what we might be looking at. As a result, only when we put the unnecessary conclusions we come to, whether they be mental or emotional in nature, can we fully see what we are looking at. That being said, we can't properly see anything without the presence of mental as well as emotional clarity and stability.

The flexibility to ask text-specific questions allows the instructor to tailor these Exit Tickets to specific materials and specific classes. More than this however, it provides a platform which is both immediate and familiar for the students to engage with the material in class from a writing perspective. It has been my experience that the more students write, the more likely it is that they will get better at writing. This system also shows students that writing is a process of encountering the text and dealing with it over time. Moreover, these kinds of programs allow instructors to see what it is that students think is most important and to understand where there are problems and what connections students might have missed in their readings.

## Mixed Results

From a pedagogical perspective, one of the most useful questions in the Exit Ticket for me was the question about whether students thought they understood the material in class. The most common answer to this question was 'Pretty well'. However, because the program affords a sense of privacy some students were able to choose the option 'Not at all'. In these instances I was able to either talk to the student one-on-one, or, go over the material again in a different format the next class. Sometimes students also gave explanations as to why they did not understand, my favorite being 'I did not read the material and therefore (sic) could not follow along in class very well'. The realization that it was, in fact, their responsibility to read the material and that their failure to do so meant that they had difficulty in class was a silver lining of sorts.

Some of the responses in the Initial Assessment to the question Do you think there are better ways to integrate digital and internet technologies into the textual analysis classroom? Please explain below included observations such as:

I think this lesson should be removed because it wastes my time. I am a student of law and I don't want to spend time to this lesson. On the other and (sic) if there are videos, movies the other things more attractive than texts it could be funny and more understandable. Or music can add more charm to lesson.

So, as I mentioned at the outset, piquing the interest of all the students in the class materials can sometimes be a challenge. Although, as the student mentioned, the use of other types of texts (musical, video and film) does sometimes tend to make these students more interested in the class overall.

## Conclusion

I have found that getting students to actively participate in engaging with the materials in class through the use of a digital and interactive platform like Socrative has meant that they have been writing more in class. As a result, the discussions on these materials have been livelier and their writing has been more substantial in terms of understanding the materials we use.

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# THE GEZİ PARK EVENTS: CROSSING the THRESHOLD into CRITICAL THINKING

Deniz Ezgi Avcı Vile

In recent years, incorporation of ‘critical thinking skills’ in EFL/ELS context has been widely acknowledged as one of the eminent goals of higher education. More recently, “the Partnership for 21st Century Skills has identified critical thinking as one of several learning and innovation skills necessary to prepare students for post-secondary education and the workforce” (Lai, 2011, p. 4). It is true that at a tertiary level having higher levels of reading and writing skills are prominent but not enough to survive in an academic context (Gajdusek, 1988). Therefore, the design of the tasks or assignments to instigate critical thinking skills is becoming increasingly paramount at Freshman Level. The aim of this paper is to present the stages of an ‘article critique task’ designed to initiate critical thinking skills and use student paper excerpts to demonstrate their attempt to apply a critical criteria when forming arguments.

## Critical Thinking

Critical thinking is rooted in two different academic strands: philosophy and psychology and the approaches taken to define what critical thinking is differs. The definitions drawn on the philosophical strand are concerned with what good thinking is, who is an ideal thinker and the capacity of people in thinking. Following on this tradition, Bailin (2002) defines critical thinking as ‘good thinking’ that meets ‘specified criteria’ or standards of accuracy and adequacy. Two of the prominent scholars, Ennis and Lipman, both focus on the standards of thinking and constructing sound criteria to evaluate one’s thinking. Ennis defines ‘critical thinking’ as reasonable, reflective thinking that is focused on what to believe or do (Cf. Norris and Ennis, 1989). Lipman’s definition similarly underscores the criteria for good thinking: “skillful, responsible thinking that facilitates good judgment because it relies upon criteria, is self-correcting, and is sensitive to context” (Lipman, 1988, p. 39). Other scholars, pursuing a philosophical foundation underscore some other qualities that critical thinking comprises such as being goal directed, purposeful, disciplined and self directed thinking, applying a self-regulatory judgment or judging in a reflective way. (Bailin et al., 1999, Facione, 1990, Paul, 1992, Facione, 2000).

In regard to the approaches drawn on the psychological strand, scholars seek to identify how people actually think and produce a list of skills that could be identified as ‘critical thinking skills’ rather than focusing on what good thinking is (Sternberg, 1986). As early as 1940s, Glaser (1942) defined critical thinking as a strategy of applying skills in a context where a problem needs to be solved and he believed that it is an attitude. Fisher (2001), giving a list of required skills, posits that critical thinking skills require reasoning, analyzing arguments, problem-solving skills, decision-making, judging credibility and evaluating inferences.

Despite the differences in belief and approaches, Facione (1990) states that many researchers concur with the idea that critical thinking “is purposeful, self-regulatory judgment which results in interpretation, analysis, evaluation and inference, as well as explanation of the evidential, conceptual, methodological, criteriological or contextual considerations upon which judgment is based” (p. 2) and they maintain that critical thinking skills can be taught as they are not a fixed entity that cannot be transformed (Stenberg, 1990; Ennis, 1989, Lipman, 1988).

## Decision Making Process:

### Task Design: Article Critique Paper

The Article Critique Task is designed as an open-ended essay-critique paper where students would engage in an authentic local or international problem context. Lai (2011) posits that “In constructing assessments of critical thinking, educators should use open-ended tasks, real-world or “authentic” problem contexts, and ill-structured problems that require students to go beyond recalling or restating previously learned information” (p.2). Their personal critique provides them a platform to evaluate the context from multiple perspectives and does not require right answers or recalling and reporting of truth tasks which are scored objectively and which do not foster or instigate critical thinking skills (Steinberg, 1990). This task is a follow up to the instruction given in the first half of the semester on analysis of a novel. In this case, the article is related to one of the themes studied: ‘Fahrenheit 451’. It is expected that students will transfer analysis, interpretation, problem solving, evaluation and inference skills practiced to a new context.

<b>Stage 3:</b>	<b>Aim: Applying Critical Criteria</b>
Round- Robin Discussions: Round 1: judgments with criteria Round 2: Evaluate the judgments and the criteria found	.Unsubstantiated opinions and hyperbole. .Facts glossed over with no explanation. .Overly emotive, provocative or exaggerated vocabulary. .Points that are unclear because of irrelevance or lack of detail. .Obvious arguments opposite to the author’s

<b>Stage 4:</b>	<b>Aim:</b>
Whole Class Discussion	Work on misconceptions through disagreements among the groups

### Skills Required:

This task aims at applying criteria to judgments rather than making judgments deprived of criteria and proposing opinions with reasons rather than without reasons (Lipman, 1984, 1988). These skills are as follows:

- . knowledge-acquisition component where an individual finds relevant previously learned knowledge and applies it to new context or material (Steinberg,1990)
- . pursuing a clear explanation of the problem (Ennis, 1989)
- . seeking plausible reasons (Ennis, 1989)
- . evaluating objectivity and preciseness (Lipman, 1988)
- . taking the issue as a whole (Ennis,1989)

### Implementation:

Task input is given with a workshop activity on an editorial entitled 'Istanbul sees history razed in the name of the reconstruction', one of the texts in the syllabus where the teacher introduces and models how to apply criteria to judgments. Instructional activities should be modeled for students showing how to shift their abilities from ordinary thinking towards critical thinking skills (Lipman, 1984,1988). Nelson (1994) also concurs that 'collaboration' in class promotes critical thinking skills as it provides opportunities to attain acculturation as well as helps correct misconceptions through disagreements. Accordingly, we aimed to create a 'collaborative' workshop with the use of round table and round-robin discussions.

In the workshop, the following procedure is followed:

Stage 1:	Aim:
a) Round table discussions: 4-5 members/ 5 aspects: each member assigned an aspect	Examining Historical/Social/Political/ Psychological /Environmental aspects
Student Pair Interviews	Clarifying /explaining the main arguments and purpose of the article

Stage 2:	Aim:
Question & Answer Teacher to Students reflecting on one's thinking	Identifying Judgments without criteria/ agreement-disagreement

## Analysis:

Article Critique Paper on “Learning From Taksim Square: Architecture, State Power, and Public Space In Istanbul”

## Introduction:

In the introduction, students are required to give a brief summary of the article focusing on the central idea and main arguments in the text to demonstrate a clear understanding of the context and the issue because interpreting and explaining are considered fundamental skills to argumentation (Facione, 1990). In addition to giving an explanation of the issue or context, they are also required to pursue a clear explanation of the problem (Ennis, 1989) and this skill is achieved through taking an objective and unbiased stand on the author’s thesis, arguments and claims and further explaining the reasons for this stance.

Below are student excerpts that show an attempt to present a summary of the text and the context in the introduction part of the critique.

[ S1 ] *‘In the article, “Learning from Taksim Square: Architecture, State Power, and Public Space In Istanbul,” Heghnar Watenpaugh expresses the minds of the protestors in Gezi Park, and their reaction against the municipality’s “ambitious” plans. According to the history of the Alevis and Armenian communities, they focus on the significance of Taksim Square. According to Watenpaugh, protestors invoke counter-memories and counter-histories which means that the municipality wants to revive Ottoman architecture in Taksim Square with urban renewal plans.’*

[ S3 ] *‘According to the ideas mentioned above, I agree with Watenpaugh’s indications. However, I am not entirely pleased with the way she presents her ideas. She uses informative language, however she does not express her ideas objectively and her examples and arguments are lack of detail’.*

[ S4 ] *‘I partially agree with Watenpaugh’s position that the resonance of urban history can have an impact on government’s urban planning, but I am not totally convinced with the way she presents it. Her claims are mostly fallacious and exaggerated, even though the examples from history sound reasonable.’*

As is seen above, students applied the aforementioned skills in their introduction as a foundation to build their own criticisms, demonstrated an understanding of constructing an unbiased and objective thesis statement while *‘proposing opinions with reasons rather than without reasons’* (Lipman, 1984, 1988). This also indicates that self-regulation and self-reflection skills are in progress as they avoid making absolute agreement or disagreement points on the issue based on their preconceived notions.

**Body:**

In this part, students are expected to transfer some of the skills practiced during the workshop and apply criteria to their judgments. In each paragraph, they need to focus on an argument and either concur or refute the author's claims and arguments in an organized logical manner. Through this application of criteria, students 'judge or evaluate' (Ennis, 1985; Facione, 1990; Lipman, 1988) the validity of the claims through applying an analysis of a) unsubstantiated opinions and lack of evidence, b) irrelevant and /or far-fetched arguments, and c) making generalizations or logical fallacies. They can, moreover disregard subjectivity and ambiguity and make use of reliable information (Ennis, 1989). In addition, they 'make inferences using inductive or deductive reasoning (Ennis, 1985; Facione, 1990; Paul, 1992; Willingham, 2007) and through 'knowledge-acquisition' where an individual finds relevant previously learned knowledge and applies it to new context or material (Steinberg, 1990) they 'take the issue as a whole' (Ennis, 1989), 'seeing both sides of an issue' (Willingham, 2007).

[ S11 ] *'...On the contrary, in Turkey, various negotiations were made in order to handle the conflict between the state and protestors in a peaceful way. ... This raises questions why author used Tahrir and it is expected that in what ways Taksim Square is similar with Tahrir Square'.*

[ S16 ] *'... her claims are not well supported and persuasive. .... However, she hasn't any airtight case for demonstrating that the underlying reason for change in Gezi Park done by the government is to persecute Armenians. This case is not only unsupported by any source but also somehow enthusing to Armenians against the government'.*

[ S6 ] *' ... In her zeal to prove her case, she triggers off negative historical memories with unrelated issues like linking the Alevi's massacres or Hrant Dink. These all events belong to different historical concepts and she prefers to combine all the issue even though the points are not clear'.*

[ S13 ] *'... She is right that the both protests are against the state power and the young population predominates in these protest movements. ... , she overstates the resemblances. Her interpretation overlooks that both government and public's reactions are distinctive because there is more democratic atmosphere in Turkey when compared to Egypt'.*

[ S16 ] *'Together with this, utilizing "ambitious" word three times in the article for urban renewal plan in Gezi Park is a contributing factor for emphasizing her own biases about government and its urban renewal plan'.*

[ S8 ] *'The author again blames the government for the mistakes of the past governments. She glosses over the past demolitions for building the Gezi Park and actually she justifies the demolition'.*

As shown above, students are applying the criteria to judge the arguments rather than solely forming their criticism based on their preconceived beliefs, political views or cultural knowledge. S11 makes an inference and questions the juxtaposition of Tahrir and Taksim squares; S16 finds the argument on 'Armenians' to be unsubstantiated in one paragraph; S6 focuses on the glossing over of historical issues and states that some examples or claims cannot be applied to this context and other students - S13, S16 and 18 - find the claims problematic due to the criteria they apply on subjectivity, generalizations, hyperbole and taking the issue as a whole.

**Conclusion:**

Students' article critique papers demonstrate an attempt to apply critical criteria when making judgments and/or forming arguments. They begin to propose opinions with reasons, which indicates a shift towards critical thinking. They activate previously learned knowledge and add to it through collaboration and research done on the issue and start to apply self-regulation when working on correcting misconceptions. Notwithstanding, it should not be disregarded that this task is a continuation of a seven-week instruction of practicing 'critical thinking skills' on the novel studied previously and aims at instigating the process of a shift in thinking and not to be 'an end product'. For the rest of the semester the students are expected to build on these skills and transfer them to new contexts.



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# A CROSS-CULTURAL APPROACH: TEACHING ACADEMIC WRITING to TURKISH EFL STUDENT WRITERS

İlkem Kayıcan

## Introduction

Teaching academic writing to EFL students at higher education institutions brings a number of issues together since EAP courses ask the teacher not only to manage the ongoing language learning process but also to teach new academic skills, and monitor the pre-writing, writing and post-writing processes. Moreover, the instructors become the facilitators for their students coping with a new culture; not a culture of a new country with all its traditions, beliefs and life style, but rather what Adrian Holliday (1999) calls small cultures such as the culture of academia and particularly the culture of writing. EFL students in EAP courses are expected to develop their English syntactically, lexically and grammatically, and they also have to acquire a completely new system of rhetorical patterns which in all probability contrast with their previous L1 writing experience. Considering these, in this paper I will (1) provide a brief introduction to contrastive rhetoric (CR) which heralded the emergence of intercultural and cross-cultural rhetoric; (2) examine the cultural and educational background of Turkish EFL students before they start their EAP courses; (3) suggest the pedagogical use of concepts from intercultural or cross-cultural rhetoric.

## Contrastive Rhetoric vs. Intercultural Rhetoric

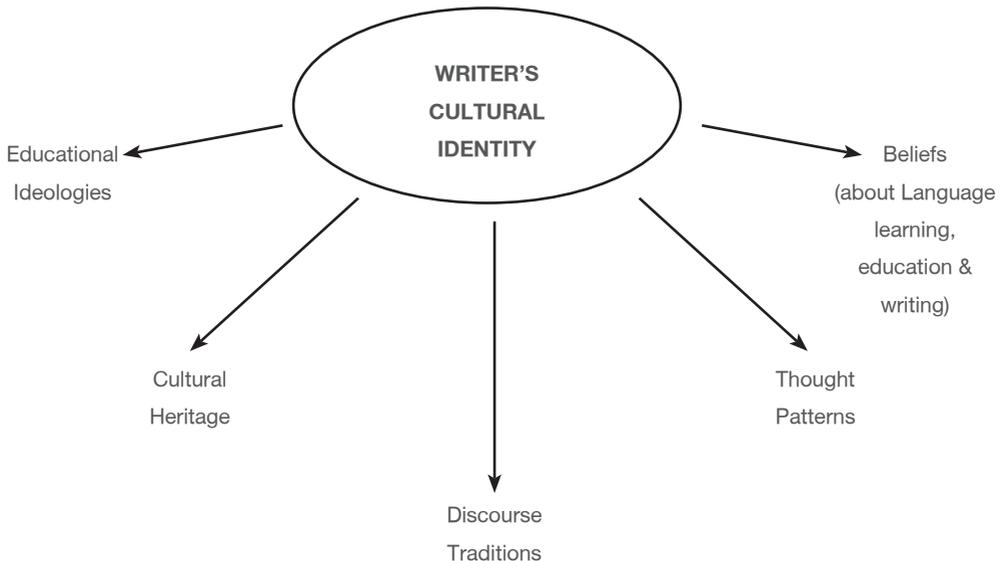
Contrastive Rhetoric was introduced when Robert Kaplan published his *Cultural Thought Patterns in Inter-Cultural Rhetoric* in 1966 based on his observations of the teaching of composition to international students in U.S. universities. He analyzed the rhetorical patterns of six hundred essays written in English by students from different cultural backgrounds. Through this textual analysis Kaplan argued that English rhetoric developed in a more-or-less linear fashion, while other languages contained distracting circumlocutions or redundancy. Although his work was disapproved of as being essentialist, discriminative and biased, it brought out the concept of Contrastive Rhetoric. The distinction he made showed that “writing is a social phenomenon that requires more than control of syntactic and lexical items” (Kaplan, 1988, p.297). His argument corresponds to how teaching writing has been perceived after the 1990s with the “post-process writing” era in writing instruction as Trimbур argued there is a ‘Social Turn’ which led to “the shift of emphasis from cognitive issues to larger social issues” (as cited in Matsuda, 2003, p.73). It means second language writing instruction cannot restrict itself to only instruction of linguistic items; it also has to consider the students’ cultural identities during the teaching and learning process.

However, rather than drawing a distinction between different rhetorics by implying the superiority of

one over another, as contrastive rhetoric suggests, intercultural rhetoric is pedagogically more useful since it encourages the EFL student writers to analyze the differences and similarities between the target rhetoric and their native one. Therefore, for better engagement of students, allowing them time and space to discover the ways how of negotiating these two different rhetorics could be pedagogically more acceptable. As well-known critical contrastive rhetoric researchers Kubota and Lehner stated:

“We are calling for a pedagogy of difference in which presumed rhetorical distinctions are naturally located among competing ideologies and exploited by students—a pedagogy that consistently roots out and critiques the ideology that is both linguistic and rhetorical...” (2004, p.25)

In intercultural rhetoric, rather than stereotypical aspects of learners’ cultures, ‘larger social issues’ have gained significance. I will summarize these larger social issues as cultural identities of students. Since culture is broad and requires a clear definition; I will refer to Xuemei Li’s conceptualization of the EFL student writer’s cultural identity. As it can be seen from the diagram below, a writer’s cultural identity is a combination of the educational ideologies, cultural heritage, discourse traditions, thought patterns of their native country and their individual beliefs about language learning and education in general (Li, 2007, p.42). It means an EFL student brings along a number of idiosyncratic qualities that directly affect their encounter with a new rhetoric that is the outcome of all these factors.



Considering this diagram, it will be also meaningful to refer to the new role of a writing instructor. Leki defined the roles of a writing teacher as the true reader (i.e., audience), coach (assistant), evaluator and examiner (1990, p.59-60); however, after the shift from cognitive issues to larger social issues in second language writing instruction, I believe a new role could be added to the list, which is the writing teacher as a ‘Cultural Informant’ as Reid mentioned in 1994. (p.273). He argued that “Instead of being worried about appropriating texts, I believe that teachers should accept their responsibility as cultural informants and as facilitators for creating the social discourse community in the ESL writing classroom” (ibid, p.275). This role suggests that writing teachers should share their cultural and rhetorical knowledge in order to raise the awareness of their non-native students.

### **The Case of Turkish EFL Students**

Unfortunately, very limited research is available comparing Turkish rhetorical patterns with Western rhetorical traditions; that is why the conclusions that will be listed below are based on my personal observations as a lifelong Turkish student of EFL and academic writing .

Turkey has a very strong oral history legacy; fairy tales, stories, anecdotes and narrations are the primary source of most of its literature and history and it has affected current communication. Such a legacy has also influenced the methods of teaching writing in Turkish secondary and high schools. Essay writing in Turkish does not have clearly definable rhetoric and organization: it is merely based on an introduction, body and conclusion without any separate instruction for each section in the classroom, and summary is encouraged rather than analysis. In addition, as Enginarlar stated, “elaborative language use with frequent metaphors, idioms, clichés, set phrases, or proverbs was found in Turkish” (as cited in Uysal, 2012, p.135).

The educational ideologies in Turkey hinder the development of critical thinking and the analytical approach which are the key components of a successful academic paper. In Turkey, learning is mostly based on memory and imitation, rather than originality; there is internalization of knowledge which promotes reproduction and imitation which is reflected in the assessments. Education, therefore, is exam-oriented and can hardly be said to foster critical thinking. Besides, writing is not tested in any national exams, which leads the students to underrate its importance as a professional skill before they encounter an academic setting. The factors listed above shape learners’ beliefs about appropriate approaches to learning. For this reason, it is very important for EAP instructors to be aware of all these constituents in order to develop the appropriate materials and tasks to help the students think critically process the new knowledge with less pain.

Besides the general educational ideologies, there are a number of aspects specific to the writing instruction in secondary education in Turkey:

1. Girgin argued that writing has been described in the Turkish curriculum as ‘an art, not science’ (as cited in Uysal 2012, 147). Writing is taught as part of Turkish Literature

courses where they read fiction or poetry and write compositions related to such works.

2. As Ruhi stated “the topics are too broad such as ‘Orman ve Ağaç’ (‘The Forest and Tree’) that limit their exposition solely to clear and neatly organized units (as cited in Koçbaşı 2006, p.12)
3. According to Aksan & Çakır, there is no prior practice regarding how to clearly frame the given topic in their exposition (as cited in Koçbaşı 2006, p.12)
4. There is use of adorned and literary language, questions, and citations (quoting citations of authority) (Uysal 2012, p.147). Students’ citations are mostly limited to Atatürk’s or ‘well known Turkish leaders’ sayings without giving reference to their particular books.
5. In most of the essays, there is overuse of personal real-life situations as examples.
6. Citing sources is not part of writing instruction in schools.
7. Writing instruction is still product-based; students are not asked to write drafts and there is no pre-writing or a feedback process.

Considering this picture, if we accept that the pedagogic use of concepts from intercultural rhetoric is crucial and useful in order to engage the students in the learning process, how can it be used in the classroom?

Since most of the contrastive rhetoric and intercultural rhetoric research done focused on ESL student writers’ experiences in the context of U.S. universities, I here attempt to offer a list of strategies that, pedagogically, could be accommodating for EFL academic writing classroom in a context of an English medium Turkish University. As an academic writing instructor teaching EFL Turkish students for more than seven years, the following techniques proved themselves empowering for students, taking my personal observations into account.

One efficacious method is to find out students’ beliefs about writing in general and decide on a particular ‘route’ to teach writing for that learner profile. In order to determine such a route, giving questionnaires on the first day of classes will help to find out students’ perceptions about writing. In this way, during the instruction process, it will allow the instructor to build the necessary connections which are idiosyncratic to students’ background.

Another method is to make use of the L1 rhetorical convention as a tool to achieve the course objective. L1 interference has been a controversial issue in Language Acquisition; however, most research on ESL academic writing instruction offer L1 use as a solution to helping students overcome their low self-confidence and anxiety. Yoshimura (2002) is one of the studies that show the benefit of using L1 in teaching ESL academic writing through explicit instruction in contrastive rhetoric (as cited in Walker, 2011, p.75). This requires comparisons, and for this reason analyzing models written in the target

rhetoric and asking students to discover the potential similarities and differences between Turkish rhetoric and the target rhetoric could also be effective. In this way they can also take control of their own papers and understand the target rhetoric more clearly.

Last but not least, teacher conference feedback sessions are one of the most recommended ways of promoting intercultural rhetoric in writing instruction. Teachers' specific, idea-based and meaning-level comments along with the close interaction between the teacher and the student writer would provide an effective learning process. Such exploratory talks; "to discuss the rhetorical differences with students in a more targeted way, in specific features of their own writing" (Walker, 2011, p.75) would be beneficial. Unfortunately most instructors can provide only written feedback due to large numbers of students in their classrooms; under these circumstances group tutorials would be a solution since conference feedback can significantly increase the rhetorical quality of students' English academic essay writing, especially for lower level English composition students (Walker 2004, 2005, 2006 in Walker, 2011, p.75).

Considering all the aspects mentioned in this paper, it should be noted that the cultural identity of students does not directly determine their performance in writing but has a big impact on the process of their learning to write in the target language. With the rapidly changing dynamics in the world, education and pedagogy call for necessary changes in practice. Most Turkish students are deprived of the advantage of using their prior knowledge to learn academic writing in English. That is why, by using intercultural rhetorically-oriented questions and activities, teachers could act as the negotiators to allow the students to make their own discoveries and be engaged in the writing process. Pedagogically, ethically and politically, it is not easy to reach out to students without taking into account the entities which make them "themselves", so students' cultural identities should always be one of the aspects for EFL writing instructors to consider in order to bridge the gap between two different rhetorics.



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# LOOKING AFRESH at STRATEGIES for FRESHMAN ENGLISH FACULTY

**Robert F. Cohen and Kim Sanabria**

Embarking on an exciting new journey, at the threshold of their university careers, students are like all explorers. They may not know what lies ahead of them and are perhaps unsure of their final destination, but they will certainly need to confront the immediate complexities of a system of scholarly and bureaucratic pursuits hitherto unfamiliar to them and all the more intimidating as a result. Freshman English presents a rigorous challenge that they will have to negotiate en route. Indeed, Freshman English has been a rite of passage for native speakers of English for generations, so one can only imagine how much more daunting this course must be for English Language Learners.

Yet, like the most fortunate travelers, freshmen are also enticed and set afire by their passion for the unknown, no matter what their language abilities. Furthermore, they carry with them many useful tools, above all the invaluable experiences that they have thus far lived. We remain as convinced as we were years ago when, in an article appearing in the book, *Reclaiming the Public University. Conversations on General & Liberal Education*, we insisted that “[somehow], when we evaluate the skills our students have yet to acquire, we must also leave room to admire their verve, appreciate their life histories, and embrace them for the considerable knowledge that they acquired in the different worlds they inhabited before coming to [the university]” (164). Like the traveler’s well-worn suitcase, these tools can provide the students with a safety cushion and allow them to pursue their path.

It is in the spirit of this context that our paper proposes to take a new look at the strategies that we, like many faculty of freshman students, have sought out and refined during our careers as instructors and designers of materials for English Language Learners entering the university.

We would like to begin with the key question: What is the purpose of Freshman English? Clearly, it aims to prepare students for all the work they will be required to do in the various university content areas, regardless of their major. In exposing them to the content areas in the liberal arts and sciences, the course also needs to develop students’ critical thinking by teaching them to make connections between texts and modes of thought. In short, in addition to ensuring that students learn the different rhetorical forms and perfect their ability to express themselves in English, the primary aim of Freshman Comp is to help students take steps along a reflective path that will nurture their growth as independent, analytical thinkers and, ultimately, as responsible world citizens.

In light of these objectives, we shall reconsider the value of a series of guiding principles. For each one, we will show how we have constructed units that adhere to these methodologies and help us to realize our goals as faculty.

- a. Using the personal essay to reflect on challenges and accomplishments

*A unit on Success*

An effective pedagogical device is to have students realize the importance of using readings as mirrors of their experiences. This strategy is important because when material serves as a lens for students' own insights, it makes them realize that the more scholarly academic pursuits required of them in the university setting always begin with their interests in mind. Since narration is one of the most accessible and useful rhetorical modes, it is optimal for a beginning unit.

In this unit, students read Helen Keller's "The Most Important Day," (2010) which is a moving account of Helen's encounter with Anne Sullivan, the teacher who recognizes in her sightless protégée the potential for rising above her considerable obstacles and fulfilling her ultimate potential. Students comment on inspiring individuals who have contributed to their progress and on the trepidation of entering unknown phases in their lives, and consider how selected quotes from Keller's story apply to themselves.

- b. Juxtaposing scholarly material and the students' own beliefs and perspectives

*A unit on Intelligence*

If we expect freshmen to make a connection between what they read and what they write, it is critical that we provide them with material that allows them to experiment with such an opportunity for self-expression. After all, all college classes expect students to juxtapose their perspective with the more scholarly content of readings and lectures in various disciplines, thereby soliciting their full participation in the college forum. A personal essay written in response to an academic reading affords students the opportunity to use the narrative structures they have already practiced to link new theories to their own lives.

In this unit, we ask students to consider the theories of three experts on intelligence. Students read "What is Intelligence, Anyway?" by Isaac Asimov (2007), a piece on Howard Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences (2011), and an article about Carol Dweck's (2006) theory of the Fixed Mindset versus the Growth Mindset. Responding to these texts allows students to consider their emotional and psychological connection with the topic of intelligence and to reflect on their own attitudes toward learning. Specific strategies include taking notes and writing summaries on the main ideas of the readings, distinguishing the writers' viewpoints, and comparing perspectives. Ultimately, when the students produce their essays, they are able to evaluate their own capabilities and assumptions in light of the new subject matter they have read.

- c. Tapping into the students' metacognitive awareness

*A unit on Education*

Realizing that students need to forge links between the readings they encounter and deepen their thought process, a next step in a writing curriculum may ask students not only to identify arguments,

but also to classify them and, further, to justify all the viewpoints being expressed. An effective mechanism for achieving this objective is to add a layer of complexity to their assignments by asking them to apply the thoughts of several writers to the ideas of a new writer.

In this unit, students first compare and contrast the educational theories of E.D. Hirsch (1984), Howard Gardner, and John Holt (1983). In his essay, Hirsch emphasizes the importance of background knowledge in literacy; Gardner encourages students to develop the discipline needed to go beyond the acquisition of basic skills in order to achieve an “incipient mastery” of the subject matter, and Holt criticizes schools that do not stimulate students’ curiosity. Unraveling the complexities of these arguments, however, is a prelude to the next step, which requires students to read a fourth piece on their own and to determine the ways in which these writers would agree or disagree with the ideas. Specifically, they are asked to read an excerpt from A.S. Neill’s preface to “Summerhill,” the innovative model founded in 1921 that promotes students’ freedom and creativity.

d. Comparing texts and explaining abstract concepts in concrete terms

#### *A unit on Philosophy*

If there is a key skill that freshman composition instructors seek to develop in their students, it is the ability to think critically. Defined in many ways, critical thinking includes understanding how the meaning of one writer’s thoughts can be explained through the lens of another writer. It is not always necessary to have lengthy readings as the catalyst; in fact, working with short passages or even quotes can provide a springboard for practicing this vital skill.

In this unit, students first read a paragraph from Albert Camus’s *The Myth of Sisyphus* on the definition of tragedy. In short, Camus claims that it is only when an individual becomes conscious that he or she is able to understand the tragedy of his plight: “If this myth is tragic, that is because its hero is conscious” (212). After discussing this idea, students then consider how it relates to the imprisonment experienced by Frederick Douglass (Douglass, 1967) and Malcolm X (Haley, A., & Malcolm X. 1965). Despite the abstract nature of Camus’s philosophical treatise, students are able to explain in concrete terms how it connects with the trials and tribulations of real people. This kind of academic exercise also reinforces the teaching of giving examples in writing.

e. Designing writing assignments that link different disciplines

#### *A unit on Science or Math topics*

Faculty often favor certain topics in the humanities and social sciences during the first part of the semester because readings in these disciplines may be more readily accessible to students with emerging proficiencies. For example, if students are able to easily relate theoretical concepts to their own life experiences, they develop the confidence they need to study psychology or sociology. However, it is also incumbent upon us to have students read material from various disciplines, including the STEM fields, and to make sure that they are being exposed to different rhetorical modes and genres.

In this unit, we show how we apply the same processes described above to reading and writing about math and physics. Students read *A Mathematician's Lament*, the provocative piece by Paul Lockhart (2009) that explores how our interest in math is often stunted by a fear of numbers. They then contrast this idea with the suggestion in the short story by Alexander Calandra (1964), *Angels on a Pin*, that this interest is further inhibited by a misplaced insistence on conformity among students' responses to math and science problems. While the students are not required to explain difficult mathematical concepts in their essays, they nonetheless do need to summarize the importance of certain formulae and equations. They are also asked to consider their own interest in mathematically based pursuits such as Sudoku, origami and kirigami, and fractals.

f. Using writing to assess students' progress

*A unit on Freedom*

We must remember that freshman composition courses are a prelude to the students' exposure to a comprehensive study of the liberal arts. With such an objective in mind, many professors and college readers choose to include primary historical sources in their reading selections. Students must be able to evaluate the significance of such material within the historical context, research background information on their own, and learn how to write a research paper, while maintaining an intimate involvement with the reading matter.

In this unit, students first read Thomas Jefferson (*The Declaration of Independence*), Abraham Lincoln (*The Gettysburg Address*) and Martin Luther King, Jr. (*I Have a Dream*) and learn to appreciate the American journey toward freedom and how each of the documents is linked to the others. In their final exam, they are asked to read a quotation from Nelson Mandela's book *The Long Walk to Freedom* and describe the ways in which Mandela's words remind them of the American discussion of freedom. Using quotes from Mandela's text, students demonstrate their mastery of paraphrasing and citation, as well as their ability to analyze and synthesize the concepts that they have learned.

Having begun with a question about the purpose of the course, we end with a question about the role of faculty. All travelers inevitably realize that they rely on the support of others to reach their destination. In this context, teachers play a multifaceted role in their students' journeys. The teacher's responsibility is to orchestrate the curriculum so that content can eventually be viewed by students as chains of ideas that connect from one text to another. When we create our curriculum, we know what we would like our students to see, and our questions and lessons are designed to promote this goal. However, it is through this guidance that we hope our students will become independent thinkers, so that they will seek out new connections for themselves not only in their studies but in their lives as well.

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## 3 for 4: THREE TOOLS for FOUR SKILLS

Tamay Ergüven Orhan

### Introduction

We are now faced with a different generation of students: the Net Generation. They obviously have different expectations about how technology should be used in class to foster their learning (Roberts, 2014). We know this new generation use the net for various reasons ranging from education and communication to self-expression. Therefore, the inclusion of the web and various tools in the teaching practice is something that cannot be overlooked.

It is a fact that technology offers solutions to many different teaching situations. When an educator researches the domain of educational technologies, she is quickly confronted with a myriad of tools, apps, software to choose from, which is a highly demanding and challenging task for the instructor who is obviously juggling several balls in her hand; the curriculum, time, demands of the institution, demands of students and sometimes demands of parents. Without doubt, selection is not the most important concern of the instructor who is aware, as is voiced by Kyei-Blankson, Keengwe, and Blankson (2009), that 'effective pedagogical strategies should come first, then appropriate technological tools second' (p.201). Therefore, the present study questions if the tools selected would have a positive effect on students' motivation and learning and what students' perceptions would be on the inclusion of the selected tools in the syllabus.

The study has been implemented with students taking ENG 102 (English for Academic Purposes II) course at METU. It is a course which has an integrated approach to teaching academic skills to freshman students, which is why three tools, which will be explained below, have been selected so as to cover all four language skills.

### Tools selected and the related literature

The first tool selected is an extensively used program, 'Youtube', which allows one to access a myriad of videos. There are definitely many ways in which Youtube videos may be used in class but in the present study they were used to provide listening practice, as a springboard for speaking activities, as a preparation for the themes in the readings and as a reinforcement of the input given in class.

According to Snelson (2011), in Roodt & Peier, 2013) there are not many studies looking into the effect of Youtube use in class and its effect on students. However, it is a tool widely used in classes for a variety of purposes. In one study carried out by Roodt and Peier (2013, pp. 473-488), the results found have been favourable for 2nd year under-graduate students at the University of Cape Town. It is suggested that students have positively welcomed its use and that it be used in other courses as well. The second program selected is a mobile application. As pointed out by Wu. et.al., (2012, in Viberg & Gronlund, 2013) 'Mobile learning is one of the dominating trends of educational applications for

new technologies' (p.170). In addition, as reported by Kukulska-Hulme (2013) - the president of the International Association for Mobile Learning - 'use of mobile phones and other mobile devices can have a positive impact on education by facilitating student learning, helping teachers do their job more effectively, and enabling the development of educational systems across the globe' (p.12). She further asserts that, used in its many forms, mobile learning pedagogy has witnessed many cases in which learning and student participation have been fostered. Even if it was not intended and not obvious in the short term, the addition of a small device in a learning environment 'can become a catalyst for change' (p.13). Thus, in the hope of achieving this change, the tool called 'Socrative' was selected. A number of comments can be found about this app on some sites reviewing educational tools.

One such comment comes from Yearwood, an associate professor and chair of the technology department at the University of North Dakota. He says;

'There is nothing quite like real-time feedback to determine if students really got it! Just about every faculty experiences that look - students' eyes indicating that they understand or do not understand the explanation given or the conclusion just drawn. But how do we really know that our students are not merely acting the part ...? ... so this is where Socrative comes to the rescue.' (2012, September 21)

Another comment in Education Technology Reviews (2013, April 18) says 'Socrative is a good student response system for creating quick student engagement'.

The third tool selected is called 'Webspiration Classroom'. There are many tools on the web that aid in mind mapping, but this program, in particular, is suitable for educational purposes with the help it offers in the outlining stage in writing. Users are given the option of creating a diagram by using visuals or an outline, and they can easily switch between the two. The program has many additional features like allowing you to work with a template offered, to collaborate with others, or to transfer your work to a Word document or Google docs. Holzberg, an educational technology specialist, says 'Developing writers will appreciate how Webspiration can help with process writing as they organize, sort, arrange, rearrange and revise connections in existing work'. (2011, April 25)

## Method and Results

In order to evaluate the effectiveness of these tools, a mini questionnaire was designed to ask for students' perceptions on the use of the selected tools and the presence of technology in general within the classroom, upon entrance to and exit from the programme. In addition, focus group interviews were held to further learn about students' ideas on the process followed.

The questionnaires were sent to 44 students through Survey Monkey. 30 participants responded in the first and 35 to the second questionnaire distributed at the beginning and end of the program. At

the beginning of the study it was observed that 80% of the students had a positive attitude to the use of technology in the classroom. Moreover, when asked to what extent technology use in class would assist their learning 74% said 'a lot' and 26% said 'a little'. Interestingly, this ratio went up at the end of the term to around 100% as is observed by the response to the prompt 'I think technology assisted me in my learning in this course'. 63% of the students chose 'Agree' and 27% chose 'Totally Agree' for this statement, which shows that its effects exceeded their expectations.

In the questionnaire distributed at the end of the term, there were more detailed questions about each tool utilized. The results indicate that Youtube had a positive impact on their learning. Around 85% of the students said that the videos watched in class helped them to generate ideas for Speaking and Writing tasks in class. The videos also produced a favourable outcome in terms of their motivation in class witnessed by 85% of the students suggesting that they felt motivated watching the videos in class. In addition, these videos led approximately 50% of the students to watch similar videos outside of class, which is one of the overarching aims of education: to have students carry on their learning outside class.

At the end of the course an informal interview was conducted with thirteen students who were asked their opinions about the use of the three tools in class. They said the Youtube videos motivated them to join in class discussions and helped them develop ideas for their writing afterwards. However, they also voiced their concerns about the difficulty level of the language used, with the exception of two students who were acquainted with such videos before. Concerned students suggested they watch videos with subtitles thinking that it would aid them in their vocabulary development and better understanding of the content.

The questions asked upon completion of the course, about the second tool Socrative, reveal that 80% of the students felt more active and engaged in the task while answering questions through Socrative. In addition, 79% of the students felt motivated seeing their answers projected instantaneously onto the screen. As is also revealed by the 7th question asked, Socrative had another positive impact on students. Around 70% of the students pointed out that they felt the need to finish answering the questions in time with everybody else. Although this might be taken as something that creates time pressure on students, it can also be helpful with another point that many instructors feel concerned with. When asked to answer questions based on a reading text some students always 'wait' till the last minute to fill in their answers or sit idly in class hoping a friend would come to their rescue and they would be left alone by the teacher. However, this tool allowed the instructor to overcome this problem. Being able to see each student's answer on the teacher's device makes it possible for her to approach each student who gives wrong answers to pinpoint their mistakes and explain why they got the answer wrong.

When questions about the use of Socrative were asked in the informal interview, there was one negative comment coming from two students. They said the tool was OK but sometimes due to connection

problems of the internet or because of waiting for everyone to finish the questions it slowed down the pace of class. This, in fact, can be attributed to the impatient nature of the Net Generation (Carlson, 2005). Besides this, all of the students said it motivated them to answer questions since it gave them an opportunity to break the dull routine of 'the book'. Students were also asked if they felt intimidated by seeing their answers projected on the slide or by the instructor calling out names from time to time to draw attention to their mistakes, as opposed to approaching individual students to correct their mistakes. The answers received were supportive of the researcher's philosophy. As one student said 'If we don't see our mistakes, how can we learn?' and as another said 'Your pointing out our mistakes made me want to do better the next time.'

Unfortunately, the answers received for the third tool selected in the questionnaire distributed upon exit to the course, were not positive. When asked if Webspiration Classroom helped them to organize their thinking into an outline, only 25% gave a positive response, 48% were neutral about it and 25% gave a negative response. The high percentage of neutral responses may point to the fact that many students did not even try to use the program.

The reasons for this were investigated in the interview. During the interview, students pointed out that they could not use the program since they found the presence of many tabs and sections in the program complicated. These negative answers could also be related to individual learning styles of students. Although it was not in the scope of the present study to seek that relation, further research on this would be helpful. In addition, students definitely needed more guidance and demonstration in class, which was not possible due to time constraints. As a result, students stuck with what they were already familiar with; the pen and the paper, which was voiced in their comments; '... because of lack of time, I stuck with the method I already am familiar with; the pen and the paper', 'I'm not much of a computer person. That's why I didn't want to use it.' There were also some positive comments about the program like, 'If I had more time, I would have definitely used it. It looks like a nice program.', 'It's especially good for students who have a more visual thinking style. It would help them.', and 'I've spent quite some time with the program and I've found it really useful. I think I'll use it for my future studies.' That last comment came from a really hard-working student.

At the end of the interview the students were also asked if they were happy with the inclusion of technology into the classroom. All of them said 'Yes' and that it really keeps them motivated and engaged in class.

## Conclusion

As stated at the beginning, there are a number of educational tools in the market, with dozens being added every day. The results obtained from the mini study carried out revealed that the tools selected have been useful for the majority of students, if not all. Finally, it should be stressed that the time invested in bringing technology into the classroom pays off at the end. The students find the use of

technology motivating and enhancing their own learning and, when selected carefully, technological tools prove helpful for an effective instruction.

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# I, EAP, TAKE THEE, CBI, TO BE MY LAWFULLY WEDDED...!

Tijen Akşit

## Background

Teaching English for academic purposes (EAP) is concerned with those communication skills in English, which are required for study purposes in formal education systems. The first recorded use of the term EAP was back in 1974 (Jordan, 2002). According to Alexander, Argent and Spencer (2008), EAP instruction prepares students, as fully as possible, to benefit from the methods of teaching and learning they are expected to meet at university. One specific teaching approach that can be employed for EAP provision is content-based instruction (CBI). Stoller and Grabe (1997) describe this approach as a way of teaching academic skills via a meaningful content based on a theme chosen by the EAP teacher.

Bilkent University, Faculty Academic English Program (FAEP), which offers credit bearing English courses to all freshmen on campus (around 3,500 each semester), has coupled the CBI approach with EAP skills teaching for more than 15 years. During a 14-week semester, the students of these EAP courses are actively engaged in authentic, stimulating, linguistically challenging input materials (mostly reading) around a specific content, and synthesize the information from this meaningful content to produce their own argument-led essays. To do so, students are expected to interpret and synthesize input materials, and think critically. Each instructor designs their own course around a topic of their choice and interest, and uses the content of the topic as a vehicle to help students practice their academic skills, mainly reading and writing. Since FAEP offers these freshman courses in more than hundred sections each semester, it has developed certain measures to ensure standardization across instructors and sections. One of these measures is the presence of clear EAP course objectives designed by and shared with program instructors. Detailed course design guidelines, on-going standardization/norming meetings with unit heads at the pre, while and post course design stages, and FAEP's in-service EAP teaching certificate program are also among these measures. FAEP believes that the approach employed in these courses both contributes to the whole-person development of students and stimulates instructors intellectually. Students' whole person development is believed to be due to the fact that students of these courses are challenged to learn how to think critically when they read and discuss intellectually and linguistically challenging course texts, and write their argument-led essays referring back to the texts covered in class to support their own arguments or to generate counter arguments. Program instructors often describe their experience of designing and teaching these courses as 'intellectually stimulating'.

## The study

A mixed method study was conducted to explore if the aforementioned strengths of the program in coupling CBI with EAP are really perceived as such by program instructors and students. The main question of the study was ‘What are instructor and student perceptions of the effectiveness of the CBI approach in teaching academic skills in general and academic writing in particular in the Bilkent University, FAE Program?’ The study employed a sequential explanatory design following a QUANqual approach (Cresswel and Clark, 2007). Thus, the study relied on first quantitative data collected via surveys from course instructors and students, and later this data was triangulated with qualitative data from individual interviews with instructors and students, from curricular and course materials, and researcher’s non-participant observation notes.

Participants of this study were the major stakeholders of the program, namely students (N=280) of these freshman courses, and program instructors (N=27) who design and teach the courses in question. These participants answered different versions of an on-line survey designed around the main features of the courses and expectations of the freshmen in question.

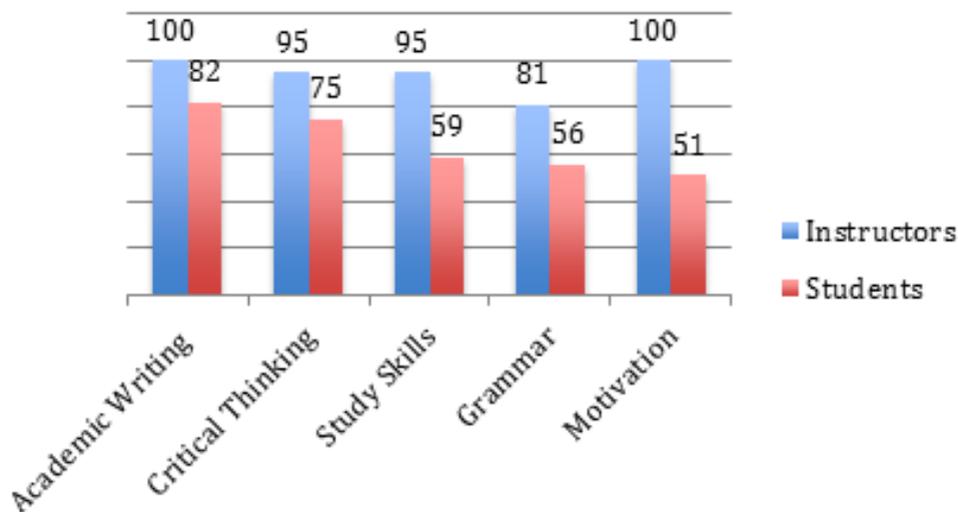
The data from surveys were analyzed using descriptive statistics by looking at the frequencies of participants’ answers to questions asked in likert-type scales or priority ranking. Following the analysis of the surveys, semi-structured follow-up interviews were conducted with 5 students and 5 instructors, who were randomly sampled among the volunteering survey respondents. During interviews, both students and instructors were asked to reflect on and describe their experiences of these CBI-EAP courses. Their suggestions for making these courses more effective in teaching academic skills were also sought. Detailed notes were taken during 20-minute-long interviews. When needed, interviewees were asked to check the notes to ensure that they reflected what participants wanted to communicate.

The qualitative data from the interview notes, relevant courses’ curricular and instructional materials, and researcher’s non-participant observation notes were analyzed using content analysis technique by identifying recurrent themes and concepts. Later, these identified themes and concepts were used to triangulate the results of the quantitative and qualitative data collected via the surveys and interviews respectively.

## Results

Figure 1 illustrates the percentages of instructors and students who believe that EAP-CBI courses taught in FAEP improve students' academic writing, critical thinking, study skills, grammar and motivation.

Figure 1 Survey Results



The majority of instructors and students believe that these courses also improve students' academic writing and critical thinking skills. The qualitative data supports this finding and explains the reasons. The instructors believe that this improvement is due to the instructional approach in class prior to the writing of essays, the opportunities presented to practice the skill of writing in multiple occurrences during the semester, and the quality feedback given on essay drafts. Students agree with instructors in that the improvement of the writing skill in these courses is mainly due to quality feedback they get on their writing. They also think that doing this type of writing for the first time - it being new - also results in learning. Disagreeing students think their skills do not improve in some teachers' classes mainly due to lack of detailed quality feedback. As for the critical thinking skills, the majority of both groups agree that these courses contribute to their development. Instructors believe this improvement is mainly realized since students are expected to understand complex arguments in readings covered in class, draw conclusions and develop their own arguments in their essays. In similar fashion, students believe these courses help them improve their critical thinking because they have a vast number of opportunities to practice evaluating information presented in the reading texts and finding the correct sections of the texts to be incorporated into their essays to support their own arguments.

As per study skills, there is a wider gap between instructor and student beliefs about how these courses function. Almost all instructors (95%) believe that these courses help students improve their study skills mainly because there are high expectations of students and strict deadlines. However, only 60% of students believe that these courses contribute to the improvement of their study skills. The main reasons why 40% of students believe that the courses do not contribute to the improvement of their study skills is that they think having too much work to do for these classes and not having enough time for their departmental courses only makes them stressed out, and does not necessarily improve the intended study skills.

Although instructor and student views about improving one's grammar in these courses show similarities, the percentages of the participants who show this agreement vary in these groups. While a great majority of instructors (81%) believe that students' grammar inevitably improves in these courses due to the fact that grammar is integrated into the practice of other skills and that students get individualized written and oral feedback on their oral and written work, a lower percentage (56%) of the students believe in the contribution of these classes to improvement in their grammar. Similar to their instructors, these students think that the improvement is mainly because of the reading and writing practice done during the semester in these courses and the individualized feedback they get from their instructors.

According to the survey results, the biggest gap between the instructor and student views about these courses was related to these courses' contribution to the student motivation level. While all instructors believe that these courses increase student motivation, only half of the students (51%) agree with that. However, a closer look at the reasons behind these choices via the qualitative data reveals that, although all instructors in the survey said these courses improve motivation, during the interviews they explained that it is the case when students are able to choose the course according to its topic - which is not always the case - and when the course topic is a meaningful and an enjoyable one. The reason why many students - 49% - thought that these courses do not contribute to their motivation is explained as not always being able to choose the course topics, and some course topics being boring. The reason why these courses can increase their motivation was explained by the fact that the grade that students get from these English language courses - according to Bilkent University rules - plays an important role in the university's decision in choosing which students to be sent to the international exchange programs, so students define these courses as 'tickets to exchange programs'.

The students and instructors presented similar views when they were asked to choose, from a long list, the most important benefits of these EAP-CBI courses. Both groups chose academic writing, academic reading and general knowledge (especially about the course topic) among the top three most important benefits of these courses. Table 1 below presents the percentages of the participants, from each group, who chose these factors as the most important benefits of these courses.

Table 1 : The most important benefits of the EAP-CBI courses in FAEP

	Academic Writing	Academic Reading	General Knowledge
Instructors	100	65	44
Students	75	60	66

When the participants of the study were asked what they believed the most important challenges of these courses were, both groups mentioned the difficulty/challenge levels of the course reading materials, and students finding it difficult to manage their time to cope with the high expectations of the course in terms of the frequency and the number of course assignments. One student describes this as 'not enough time, too much work'. Instructors also said that one of the biggest challenges for students in these courses is that this is the first time they are expected to write such complex advanced level essays which are very different from their high school or English language prep program compositions. According to the students, another challenge posed by these courses is that the themes and topics discussed in these classes are intellectually challenging. On this issue, one student says that 'these topics would be difficult even in one's own language'.

Both instructors and students have some suggestions to be implemented in these courses to increase their effectiveness in teaching academic English in general and academic writing in particular. While the instructors would like to decrease the number of objectives that they are expected to cover in these classes, by focusing only on, for example, reading and writing in one course and listening and speaking in another, the students, who believe that there is already a great emphasis on reading and writing, would like to have more focus on speaking and listening. Both groups believe that there should be a less heavy homework load. Instructors also highlight the need for smaller class sizes. On the other hand, students also emphasize the importance of being able to choose the course topics.

## Conclusions

The following are the main conclusions of the study and some recommended courses of action. The EAP-FAE courses offered in FAEP, as perceived by instructors and students, help students improve their academic writing, academic reading, general knowledge and critical thinking. However, there is a need to reconsider the number of curricular objectives in these courses and the way they are spread over the two courses, especially considering the focus given to individual academic skills. Another area that necessitates immediate action seems to be the course registration system. The system, which is currently beyond the program's control, needs to be reconsidered to give more opportunities for students to choose course topics of their interest. There also seems to be a need to reassess the amount of assessed tasks in these courses to avoid some possible counter productivity on the part of the students due to lowered motivation levels.

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# THE EFFECT of COOPERATIVE LEARNING TECHNIQUES on READING COMPREHENSION ABILITY

Reza Abdi and Shirin Nasiri

## Abstract

This study aimed at investigating the effect of two techniques of Cooperative Learning, i.e. Student Team Achievement Divisions (STAD) and Team-Games-Tournaments (TGT), on the reading comprehension ability of English as Foreign Language (EFL) learners in Iran. In order to ensure the homogeneity of the subjects in terms of language proficiency, Oxford Placement Test (OPT) was administered and pre-intermediate female subjects were identified. After administering OPT, a group of 90 homogeneous students were selected from a total population of 135. Then, they were randomly assigned to one control and two experimental groups. The experimental groups (A and B) received instruction according to STAD and TGT policies respectively, but the control group was taught using Conventional Instruction (CI) techniques. A post-test was administered, and the results were analyzed through one-way ANOVA. The results indicated that STAD policies had statistically significant effects on reading comprehension ability of EFL learners, but TGT and CI procedures did not enhance reading comprehension significantly.

*Keywords:* Cooperative Learning; Student Teams Achievement Division; Teams-Games-Tournaments; Conventional Instruction; Reading Comprehension

## Introduction

Cooperative learning (CL) seems to attract a lot of attention in language teaching (Keyser, 2000). It is one of the most significant and productive areas of theory, research, and practice in education (Johnson, Johnson & Stanne, 2000). Slavin (1982) defined CL as instructional methods in which students of all levels of performance work together in small groups to attain a common end. He expressed the most important character for CL is that, the success and achievement of one student is dependent on the success and achievement of the other students. Larsen-Freeman (2000) stated that “in cooperative learning, teachers teach students collaborative or social skills so that they can work together more effectively” (p. 164).

According to Kagan (1990), there are over fifty forms of CL. Each has its appropriate application depending on the nature of the student population and the type of educational outcome to be fostered. All of these strategies have a common concept: students learn together and each takes personal responsibility for her/himself and the group member. According to Slavin (1982), they include: Learning Together (LT), Teams-Games-Tournaments (TGT), Group Investigation (GI), Student Teams

Achievement Divisions (STAD), Team-Assisted Individualization (TAI), Jigsaw, etc. Of particular interest to the current study are “Student Teams Achievement Divisions” (STAD), and “Teams-Games-Tournaments” (TGT).

According to Slavin (1995), in STAD, which is a peer-tutoring method, students are assigned to up to five member learning teams. The teams are made up of high, average, and low performing students. Ghaith (2004) has declared four essential stages for STAD in the classroom; teaching, team study, individual quizzes, and team recognition. In the first stage, the members of group listen to the teacher’s explanation. As a second phase, they work in mixed groups based on their ability to complete activities or worksheets. In the third stage, they take individual quizzes. As a final point, they distinguish their team achievements. According to DeVries and Edwards (1974), TGT, like STAD, is a peer-tutoring method, in which the teacher assigns students to groups of up to five heterogeneous students. The only difference with STAD is in the exclusion of individual quizzes and inclusion of students’ academic games and their competition at tournament tables. These strategies have not been examined in our context.

In the light of the above, the purpose of the present study is to examine and weigh up the effectiveness of two techniques of CL (STAD and TGT) and conventional instruction (CI) in improving reading comprehension ability.

## Methodology

### Participants

The subjects of the study were chosen from Nasr 1 and 2 Institutes in Ardabil, Iran, and totaled 135 female freshman students. After administering the Oxford Placement Test (OPT), 45 of them were excluded from the study and 90 pre-intermediate students were identified. The 90 participants were randomly assigned to two experimental and one control groups. Group A (n=30) was taught by STAD; group B (n=30) TGT, and group C (n=30) control group.

### Instruments of the Study

The first instrument was Edwards’ (2009) OPT. The second instrument was the reading materials of “Interchange” (pre-intermediate), written by Richards (2003) and published by CUP.

The third instrument was the Reading Comprehension Test. In order to test students’ reading comprehension, a test “Select Reading” with 20 questions was administered to the participants (Lee & Gunderson, 2002).

## Procedures

The study was conducted in 10 sessions. In the first session, the researcher oriented students to CL and its advantages in EFL situation. Treatments of the groups took place from the second through the ninth sessions. In each class, the ten students who scored highest on the OPT were identified as high-achievers and the ten who scored lowest were considered as low-achievers. The rest of the ten students were identified as average-achievers. The students were placed into groups of one high, one low, and one average-achiever to make them as heterogeneous as possible (Acar & Tarhan, 2008). Therefore, each group was divided into 10 learning groups (heterogeneous teams) with three students in each group.

The teacher gave the instructional units to the first experimental group according to the STAD techniques. The instruction proceeded according to such components as teaching, team study, individual quizzes, individual improving scores, and team recognition (Slavin, 1995). After each four units, students took the quizzes. They had to work alone on these quizzes. Each individual student's test score was compared to their base score obtained in the OPT and the difference, which was computed in terms of a percentage, was their individual improvement score. Individual improvement score was then transferred to individual improvement points. The improvement points were awarded according to the criteria suggested by Slavin (1995). The purpose of base scores and improvement points is to make it possible for all students to bring maximum points to their teams.

Teams that averaged 15 to 20 improvement points received a Good Team certificate. Teams that averaged 20 to 25 improvement points received a Great Team certificate, and teams that averaged 25 to 30 improvement points received a Super Team certificate (Slavin, 1982).

The instruction for the group (B), following the TGT, was the same as STAD. The only difference was that they played academic games instead of taking quizzes. The game used consisted of cards containing multiple-choice and true-false questions on the subject matter. Each student in turn picked a card, read the question on it, and answered the question. During game, if a student was not able to answer, the other students got a chance. The high scorer was moved "up" to the next table for the following tournament, while the lower scorer moved "down" (Slavin, 1990).

The instructions for the control group were according to CI technique. The teacher presented the lesson in the form of a lecture and demonstrations. Then, students listened to the teacher and noted down the board summary. They asked the teacher questions on areas of the topic that were not clear to them and, following that, the teacher asked the students questions and the students answered individually.

Finally, the reading comprehension passage with 10 related multiple-choice and 10 true-false questions were presented to the participants. In order to measure the effects of STAD, TGT, and CI on reading comprehension, students' scores in the reading test were analyzed.

## Results

In order to test the normality of the groups, the One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov test (K-S) was employed which indicated (Sig value of 0.736, 0.750, and 0.172 for STAD, TGT, and CI respectively) that the scores of the proficiency test were normally distributed. Then, the one-way ANOVA showed that the groups were homogeneous at the beginning, although this was expected as only pre-intermediate students were selected.

Table 1: Result of One-way ANOVA on Proficiency Test Scores

	Sum of SquareS	df	Mean square	F	Sig
Between Groups	0.600	2	0.300	0.020	0.980
Within Groups	1319.500	87	7.76		
Total	1320.100	89			

To test comprehension, students' scores on reading comprehension test were analyzed, the descriptive statistics of which appear in Table 2.

Table 2 : Descriptive Statistics for Groups' Performance on the Post-test

Groups	N	Maximum	Minimum	Mean	Std. Deviation
STAD	30	19	8	15.23	2.84
TGT	30	19	7	14.96	3.06
CI	30	18	6	13.16	2.79

In order to investigate the possible differences among the participants' means on the post-test, one-way ANOVA was utilized (Table 3). The F-value was statistically significant, ( $F = 4.438$ ,  $p = .015$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). This confirms that the three groups behaved differently on the reading comprehension test as shown in Table 3.

Table 3 : Results of One-way ANOVA for the Groups' Performances on the Post-test

	Sum of SquareS	df	Mean square	F	Sig
Between Groups	74.82	5	37.41	4.43	0.015*
Within Groups	733.40	87	8.43		
Total	808.22	89			

Table 4 : Post-hoc Scheffe Test for the Groups' Performances on the Post-test

Groups	Groups	Mean Difference	Std. error	Sig.
STAD	TGT	0.30	0.75	0.923
	CI	2.06*	0.75	0.026
TGT	STAD	-0.030	0.75	0.923
	CI	1.76	0.75	0.068
CI	STAD	-2.06*	0.75	0.026
	TGT	-1.76	0.75	0.068

## Discussion and Conclusion

According Almanza (1997), a positive outcome cannot be achieved only by putting students in groups and expecting them to work well with each other. The fundamental components of effective CL must be in place, so that students can come to feel that they are the active contributors, not only to their teams, but also to their class as a whole.

Considering the results of the present study, it is obvious that cooperative learning is more effective in improving reading comprehension skills of learners who study EFL when compared with conventional teaching methods (Almaguer 2005; Jalilifar 2009; Liang 2002; Shabban 2006). All of the above scholars have found that the cooperative teaching methods in relation to the reading achievement of the learners resulted in better results after the treatment.

Research has shown that cooperative learning techniques promoted students' learning, academic achievement, and their self-esteem (Abu and Flower, 1997; Johnson and Johnson, 1981, 1992). The participants in this study also expressed that they did not feel any stress or anxiety during the experimental studies in their class, and they did not get bored either, because they were active during nearly the whole lesson. They felt that they were learning a target language as if it was used outside the classroom. The results also demonstrated that there were statistically significant differences between control and experimental groups on dependent variables of reading comprehension in favor of the experimental STAD group (A). TGT and CI did not show any significant influence on the learners' reading comprehension. The findings and previous literature supported the use of STAD through using cooperative learning as a successful instructional strategy to improve reading comprehension. However, it needs to be noted that cooperative learning in its many methods and forms is not the solution to all second language learning problems.

The findings of the present study suggest ideas not only for teachers and learners, but also for syllabus designers. The selection and implementation of suitable kinds of pair and group work exercises can make cooperation easier than other techniques.

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# IMPROVING ACADEMIC READING SKILLS THROUGH STUDENT DESIGN of INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS

Elizabeth Alssen

## Introduction

Successful foreign language learning, as any learning, requires an active approach on the part of the students. Engagement in the learning process has been recognized as a concept involved in successful studying (Määttä & Uusiautti, 2012). Engagement can be defined as ‘the quality of effort students themselves devote to educationally purposeful activities that contribute directly to desired outcomes’ (Hu & Kuh, 2002). Engaging students in generating instructional materials or assignments for peers has been reported in non-linguistic settings (Hakkarainen, 2007; Vreman-de Olde & Jong de, 2004). Designing and publishing Web pages during foreign language courses have also been reported (Cavallaro & Krishnan, 2007; Toyoda, 2001).

Constructivism posits that learning is an active process where personal experiences play a key role in constructing knowledge. Every learner has a different set of experiences, so the constructed knowledge is personalized. Learning by design (LBD) is one process assisting learners with knowledge building. The designing process has been demonstrated to employ higher order thinking skills, increase interest, develop reflection and instigate thorough examination of topics (Lehrer, Erickson, & Connell, 1994). Furthermore, the concept of knowledge as design (Perkins, 1986) postulates that acquiring knowledge is enhanced when learners act as designers and produce representations of knowledge such as artefacts or models. Generating artefacts which are meaningful to the learner and can be shared with others is also advocated by constructionism as a process reinforcing knowledge building (Han & Bhattacharya, 2001; Harel & Papert, 1991). LBD involves collaboration, experimentation, discussion and exploration (Han & Bhattacharya, 2001). It makes learners responsible for their learning through making decisions, sharing, designing, piloting, evaluating, modifying and reflecting (Han & Bhattacharya, 2001). Thus, it can be stated that LBD supports and facilitates engagement in the learning process.

Authenticity and reference to the real world applications are salient features of LBD (Han & Bhattacharya, 2001). The advantages of using authentic activities have been well documented in the literature (see Carr-Chellman & Savoy, 2004, and Herrington, Oliver, & Reeves, 2003 for a survey of results in numerous studies) although students’ unpreparedness for authentic learning environments have also been reported (Carr-Chellman & Savoy, 2004; Herrington et al., 2003; Hong, Lai, & Holton, 2003). Authenticity in the current research encompasses both authentic tasks (designing of instructional materials which can be shared by other students) and authentic materials. A widely accepted definition of ‘authentic materials’ in foreign language teaching and learning describes them as designed for native speakers of a given language but not intended for educational applications. Such materials adjusted for the classroom use are referred to as ‘genuine materials’ by Widdowson (1990). For the purpose of

the present study, student-designed instructional materials are defined as authentic materials, further referred to as 'authentic sources', which are adapted for language learning. An example could be an original journal article or a book chapter which students transform into a cloze, or accompany with student-made comprehension questions. Information and Communication Technology (ICT)-enhanced instructional materials denote authentic sources, whose adaptations have been designed by using authoring tools, or webpages generated by students through HTML coding or programming and subsequently published on the Internet.

Nowadays improving reading skills is needed in many study contexts (Stoller, Anderson, Grabe, & Komiyama, 2013). Reading is not a simple process. It combines many skills and areas, for example automatic word recognition, large receptive vocabulary, grammatical processing, and comprehension skills (Grabe, 2010). Reading fluency and comprehension are both a function of implicit learning, which, in turn, points to an adequate amount of extensive reading (Grabe, 2010). Student exposure to reading in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) courses is insufficient (Stoller et al., 2013).

Knowledge of vocabulary has been highly correlated with reading comprehension (Mehrpour, Razmjoo, & Kian, 2011; Qian, 2002). As Waring and Nation (2004) point out, inferring the meaning of a word from the context does not equate to committing it to memory. Based on a review of several studies, they conclude that incidental vocabulary learning depends on the number of times a word is encountered, in general, the more encounters, the better retention. When students design instructional materials based on written authentic sources, the exposure time is extended as they need to re-read passages, consider lexical meanings and understand the context in order to write comprehension questions or design a multiple choice or true/false formats.

## **The Context and Aim of the Study**

The design of instructional materials was embedded in the English for Specific Purposes (ESP) courses taught to university students of education and computer science. The courses were part of compulsory English studies and were delivered through a blended model.

The report is part of a larger study exploring student perceptions of learning ESP through ICT-enhanced peer design of instructional materials, and investigating if the designing process promoted, in learners' opinion, development of language skills, ICT skills, learning skills or other skills. The current report focuses on reading skills and the aim was to find out if, according to students, their reading skills developed, and what promoted or hindered that development.

## Methodology

### Participants and Settings

The total number of students participating in the study was 53 but not all of them were freshmen. The sub-group of students selected for the present report (N=29) had completed standard 10-year English studies in Finnish primary and secondary schools. They were students of computer science (n=8) and education (n=21) at the University of Joensuu in Finland and participated in the study in 2002 and 2004. Out of all students (N=29), 23 expected considerable improvement of their reading skills by the end of the courses. The full cycle of materials design and production adapted an LBD model, the 'path of knowledge', proposed by Han and Bhattacharya (2001). The cycle is presented in Alssen (2012).

### Methods of Data Collection and Analysis

Data were gathered through reflective journals, end-of-course questionnaires, and audiotaped group interviews. As regards language skills, the primary instrument was the questionnaire, the secondary, or corroborating, instruments were the reflective journals and interviews. Supplementing one method of data collection with other methods has been reported (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). The questionnaire contained open-ended questions. The responses regarding perceived degree of improvement of language skills were categorised and coded. As the study was conducted by one researcher, the intrarater reliability was addressed. According to Seliger and Shohamy (1989), intrarater reliability denotes repeated interpretation of data by one rater after a time lapse. The study was teacher-conducted and used the "teacher as researcher" approach (for discussion see Alssen, 2012).

## Results and Interpretations

The total response rate for perceptions regarding improvement in reading skills was 29 (100%, N=29). As can be seen in Table 1, a total of 23 students self-rated their improvement as at least 'a little'. Ten students, but only students of education, perceived improvement as 'considerably much'. Table 1 further shows that almost all students of education (ED students), as compared with only half of the students in the computer science group (CS students), considered their reading skills better at the end of the course.

Table 1. Perceptions regarding improvement in reading skills

Perceived degree of improvement	CS (n=8)	ED (n=21)	All students N=29
Considerable		10	10
A little	4	9	13
Not at all or hardly	1	1	2
No perceptions	3	1	4

Note. CS and ED denote students of computer science and education, respectively.

Improvement of reading skills was attributed primarily to reading large quantities of authentic sources by two CS students and 11 ED students, and to designing instructional materials by two ED and two CS students. Searching authentic sources for texts suitable for instructional materials design involved extensive reading. The influence of such reading on improving reading comprehension, fluency and vocabulary has been established in many studies (for review see Grabe, 2010). The present study did not measure how much extensive reading was done by individual students. Neither did it measure the initial proficiency in reading. Thus, the differences in perceived degree of reading improvement among students can be attributed to varied pre-course levels of reading skills, or the amount of authentic sources covered. Furthermore, some students may have selected authentic sources corresponding to their not so high language proficiency level rather than more academically demanding texts, so the reading skills did not improve considerably, if at all. As regards computer science academic level authentic sources, many can be too technical, narrowly-focused, and difficult to understand by students. They may also contain too many mathematical formulae to be suitable for designing any language instructional materials based on them. Consequently, CS students may have opted for selecting less linguistically and content demanding articles to be able to proceed with the design. Hence, reading skills may have not improved as much as expected.

Single students also reported improvement in reading sub-skills: deducing meaning from the context, skimming, scanning and differentiating between factual information and opinions. This conforms with the attributes of good readers listed in Stoller et al. (2013).

Gaining the designers perspective requires understanding of principles and structures, generating and answering questions (Perkins, 1986). Design of foreign language instructional materials requires thinking of alternative answers or distractors in multiple-choice questions (Arneil & Holmes, 1999). Two students expressed these processes as follows: 'Making the tasks helped me understand the whole article and the words related to it', and '[when creating an open question exercise] you need to understand the content of the text, not just to know what a separate word means [...] you need to understand what the message of the whole text is'. Student comments may suggest that the designing process necessitated a deeper approach to reading than superficial recognition and understanding of individual words. The deep approach to reading includes negotiation of meaning, constructing new meaning, analysis or synthesis. These processes are employed by successful academic readers (Hermida, 2009).

Extensive reading was reported by 18 (N=29) students to have increased domain-specific vocabulary at least 'a little' while reading through authentic sources. It corroborates a generally accepted view that extensive reading promotes incidental vocabulary learning (Atilgan, 2013; Huckin & Coady, 1999; Mohseni-Far, 2008).

No factors impeding reading were explicitly stated in this research group. However, one CS student pointed out lack of 'set' reading with traditional reading comprehension exercises. It may be inferred that

extensive reading of authentic sources was not regarded as 'real reading'. The comment is consistent with recommendations in Stoller et al. (2013) on how to improve reading instruction. Although students in the research group were familiarized with types of reading comprehension activities they could design to accompany texts from authentic sources, the time limitation of this research project allowed only for assigning a task of finding authentic sources appropriate for instructional materials design.

## Concluding Remarks

At the time when student learning outcomes are at issue (Biggs & Tang, 2011), teaching approaches activating deep learning are advocated at the tertiary level (Lammers & Murphy, 2002; Machemer & Crawford, 2007). A 'captive sample' (Robson, 1993) of 29 students participated in the study so the findings cannot be generalised without due caution. However, this small scale research has a potential of being replicated in other domain-specific groups of students. Pre- and post-design reading skills can be tested to measure any improvement. Student perceptions can be compared against the level of difficulty of designed instructional materials and close analysis of the materials could point to using more effective ways of teaching and learning. The present study can contribute to the body of research aiming at improving the quality of foreign language teaching at the tertiary level by drawing on student domain-specific expertise and putting students in the centre and in control of their learning.

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# EFL STUDENTS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS NEW TECHNOLOGIES in EDUCATION: THE CASE of MASTER'S STUDENTS at UDL of SIDI BEL-ABBES

Melouk Mohamed

## Introduction

The technological explosion of the last fifty years has affected all domains of our daily life. Education is no exception to the rule; it has not remained indifferent to the profound changes taking place in other areas of knowledge. The impact of those changes on educational areas is increasing and broadening. The first question that might arise when considering whether to introduce computers into the writing classroom is: do computers improve the writing of students? The answer, surprisingly, is that we are not sure, but it is worth trying.

## Using Computer to Teach Writing

In spite of the contradictory or inclusive research on the qualitative changes effected in writing any word-processing system, the computer does improve students' writing at certain more specific levels. Students usually produce neat texts and take pride in the neatness of these texts; they also produce, to a certain extent, more error free texts, as well as develop computer skills and better communication, cross-culturally.

It is easier for the teacher to intervene due to the neat orderly presentation of text on a monitor. It is also much easier to reshuffle, add, modify or delete words and/or sentences without crossing out or erasing, leaving just "neat text". In addition, they may not remember where that paper is; instead, all they need access to that text, which is waiting in the computer.

Citing the above benefits of using computers to teach English in general and writing in particular does not mean that computers are the panacea for all pedagogical difficulties, but a new tool that is gaining ground in our daily life. It is like the use of the calculator in education nowadays. In addition, it can be used to avoid monotonous classical writing lessons and cut down routine and some of the students' boredom in class. The writing laboratory may give more interest and motivation to learners. Yet, teachers can combine pen, paper and computers in the different writing phases - pre, while and post.

Nevertheless, applying such technological tools requires the availability of both computers and Internet connection. This implies a serious financial problem as well as the spatial limit for the computer laboratory. Another requirement is the capability of teachers to handle new technologies. Some if not many language teachers are not computer specialists and so it is reasonable to demand too advanced

computing knowledge and skills from them, for computer facilities could benefit language learning. Like teachers, students need to have reasonable computer knowledge. The present study is based on the following question:

- To what extent are EFL students ready to cope with the introduction of these new technologies in English language classes?

Trying to answer the above question one hypothesis was formulated:

Today's students are so visually oriented that they are in favour of ICT in EFL classes.

## Population and Research Tool:

The participants in this study were sixty-four First year Master students of English randomly selected in the department of foreign language at Djillali Liabes University of Sidi Bel-Abbes. They were asked to respond to a structured questionnaire to collect data and test the above hypothesis.

## Analysis and Discussion

In the two first questions the researcher wanted to know if the informants had a computer at home and whether they enjoyed working with computers. 60 out of 64 Master students said that they had a computer at home and admitted that they no more considered as a luxury. Nearly all admitted that they enjoyed working with such a tool. The study shows that most of the participants (58) said that they had an email box while 43 claimed that they had face-book address and they usually shared documents with friends and classmates. These Master students were all in favour of introducing "Informatics" as a module for students of English and believed that computers could promote different language skills in general and writing in particular. Consequently, the formulated hypothesis has been confirmed that today's students are more visually oriented and they are in favour of ICT in EFL classes.

Number	Percentage %	Actions
60 out of 64	93.75 %	had a computer at home
44 out of 64	68.75%	they no more considered the computer as a luxury but a work tool
61 out of 64	95.31 %	enjoyed working with such a tool
58 out of 64	90.62 %	had an email box
43 out of 64	67.18 %	had facebook address and often shared documents through

It is worth mentioning some of the limitations to this study; first, one of the shortcomings of a case study is that it cannot be generalized. Second, this particular case is based on one research tool

only, namely a structured questionnaire, which does not allow the researcher to crosscheck the data collected. Third, there is no doubt that both teachers and students should have some computing skills. Finally, giving the teachers the opportunity to express themselves on the subject would probably lead to other perspectives.

## The Internet for Writing

The Internet is another innovative way of using the computer as a communication tool in educational settings. It is a worldwide network that connects many smaller networks with a common set of procedures for sending and receiving information. Morrison, et al (1999) identified three educational uses for the Internet. It serves as a source of information, a place for collaboration, and a place to publish. Many schools are linked to the Internet so those students are able to access information and communicate with people in their communities and around the world.

Others such as Cummins and Sawyers (1995), Gable (1997) Yost (1998) Mills (1995) and Donovan (1998) maintained that it is through this medium that there can be widespread educational renewal in our schools. In using the network system of the Internet, educators can promote academic development across the curriculum, including literacy development, critical thinking, and problem solving. Lacombe (1997) concluded that good writing is a taught skill, and a computer facilitates the execution of that skill. She emphasized the use of the computer as a tool for writing and not a solution to the problems that face students in their writing. She cautioned that as a tool the computer could ease the writing process that is exacerbated by the difficulty of making revisions with pencil and paper.

The fast evolution and the availability of new technologies - multimedia, electronic network and the new methods of transmission and information - are changing the way the educational system works, slowly but steadily. The data show is replacing the chalkboard, and the flash disk lesson plan documents. In other words, they are broadening the array of possibilities for the limited traditional teaching-learning process.

Hence, teachers are not asked to abandon those traditional methods absolutely, but to update them according to the new educational expectations. Being taught how to use computers has become necessary for any learner whatever his/her special field is, for there are countless reasons to justify the implementation of such technological projects. It is impossible to predict exactly what effects the Internet, for instance, will have and bring to education, but it is becoming evident that it is here to stay and it is ready to influence society. It is becoming imperative, then, that learning to work with computers and understanding new technologies is assimilated into the curriculum and into the teaching methods.

It is also almost impossible to ignore the Internet; it is an invaluable source of information, which can be useful in education. Learning to work with the information highway is a prerequisite today. People speak about information and Communication Technology illiteracy (ICT), (who is ICT literate and who is not) particularly in job opportunities.

The Internet has tremendous potential as a tool for teaching EFL learners. We should best utilize this new phenomenon to enable our students to be part of the global village as well as to carry on real correspondence with other EFL learners and native speakers of English throughout the world, by experiencing the virtual classroom and making use of the Internet in a meaningful context.

## E-mail in Writing Lessons

Among the new technologies, 'e-mail' is one of the most popular applications used on the Internet. It can be anything from an informal one-liner to a formal letter but using acceptable correct grammar and vocabulary. Teachers, nowadays, in many places of the world seem to be increasingly inclined to publicize their e-mail addresses as their preferred mode of contact with students outside of class. This would allow students to have more contact with their teachers who wish to discuss daily or weekly assignments, ask questions, and get clarifications on assignments easily and even send copies as e-mail attachments. E-mailing may be motivational for shy students to express their views more openly without fear; this may give them self-confidence and eventually improve their writing ability. Using the Internet to teach EFL students may be extremely useful as it is a treasure of authentic materials for teachers and students and the information used is up-to-date. Furthermore, students are more visually oriented: they are not very excited by mere textbooks, no matter how colourful they have become.

According to studies done twelve years ago in some western countries, students showed positive attitudes towards e-mail as a teaching-learning tool. They were highly motivated because they perceived e-mail as a highly stimulating and dynamic means to communication. Research also shows that e-mail is a very useful vehicle for teaching English Lee, (1998). Students, nowadays, feel acquainted and more familiar with a communication tool that is vital to their survival in the twenty-first century. With the LMD system, educational institutions often argue for the students' autonomy. The use of the Internet is more convenient for such objectives, and the vital interaction and feedback may give them a sense of responsibility for their own learning as well as a sense of particular freedom. Besides, e-mail can furnish teacher-student, student-teacher communications, exchange of dialogue journals and writing conferencing Belisle, (1996).

## Conclusion

It is believed that it is high time to think of introducing computers for teaching writing and taking advantage of the new technological tools and include them in education to help prepare future citizens to survive in the information and communication era. Yet, the integration of e-learning at university level, at least the introduction of new media in EFL needs time and money. We know more or less how to use some communication tools, but do we know really how to build a new learning culture and to set its bases and promote its success? Could we avoid the exclusion of those who cannot manipulate and manage these rather sophisticated modern tools? The answer is not simple.

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# BRIDGING THE GAP: ATTITUDES, EXPERIENCES, and ASSUMPTIONS in FRESHMAN COMPOSITION

Lia McCoskey and Umur Çelikyay

## Introduction

Foundational studies in intercultural (contrastive) rhetoric have shown that writing varies between cultures and that L1 rhetorical norms can be transmitted to ESL writing (Kaplan, 2001). The study of intercultural rhetoric is a growing area of interest in Turkey. Building on foundation studies (Kaplan, 2001; Hinds, 1987; Atkinson & Ramanathan, 1995; Connor, 1996), studies on intercultural rhetoric in Turkey have, among other things, focused on aspects of intercultural rhetoric such as the impact of first language interference in English language composition (Elkilic, 2012); transfer of rhetorical patterns in L1 and L2 writing (Uysal 2008); the contrastive study of specific linguistic formulas (Şakırgil & Çubukçu, 2012); and adherence of certain student profiles to particular academic structures (Bayat, 2009).

This study works to further our understanding of the cultural forces at play in ESL classrooms in Turkey. In Turkey, as in many international university-level ESL writing programs, the reading, writing and critical thinking tasks that are mainstays of ESL curriculum privilege Western academic conventions, and many students come to the university with little awareness or experience of these conventions. Silva (1992) has suggested that L2 writers come to class with a series of strongly held beliefs about writing and learning to write in English, and these student writers place emphasis on lexis and grammar rather than the writing process. This problem is further complicated by the fact that instructors are often native English speakers with diverse experiences in teaching. Due to this issue, and the fact that research on intercultural rhetoric is in its nascence in Turkey, instructor perceptions towards student needs and learning stems primarily from observation and assumption. As a result, there is often a gap, which may or may not be manifest, between instructor expectations and student ability and understanding.

This study attempts to bridge this gap by investigating student and instructor attitudes, assumptions, and experiences toward academic writing at Koç University in Istanbul, Turkey. This four-part study surveyed 200 freshman students, interviewed 20 English Language Center (ELC) students in focus groups, surveyed 10 academic writing instructors, and conducted an instructor workshop based on the results of the study. Data regarding student understanding of several aspects relevant to academic writing, including awareness of writing conventions in English, understanding of rhetorical norms in both English and Turkish, and the type of writing practiced prior to entering the university, was collected, as was data regarding instructor assumptions of student responses in these areas. For this paper, we focus on one primary gap identified in the study: the gap between student and instructor

assessment of two essays written in English.

The findings suggested that students were aware that expectations associated with university-level writing in English were different than what they were accustomed to from their previous schooling, and they were able to identify some of the key elements of successful writing in English. However, they simultaneously demonstrated a predilection toward writing that could be considered to reflect “Turkish” rhetoric. Although instructors seemed to be aware that this particular student profile lacked experience with writing in English, the instructors were not aware of the emphasis that the students placed on features of writing that are often discouraged in English language writing instruction.

## Methods

Data was collected through the administration of a student survey, student focus groups, and a faculty workshop. Student responses were collected in Turkish and subsequently translated.

### Student Survey Methods:

200 freshman students completed the survey prior to receiving instruction in their Academic Writing 101 classes. The 30-question survey was conducted in Turkish and composed of multiple choice and short answer questions that targeted five key areas:

- Reading and writing practices outside of school
- Reading and writing experiences in secondary school
- Student writing processes
- Student understanding of plagiarism
- Student attitudes and beliefs about college writing in English

### Student Focus Group Methods:

Five focus groups of six ELC students were conducted. These groups discussed four topics:

- Student attitudes and beliefs about college writing in English
- Responses to two writing samples (that reflected Turkish and English rhetoric)
- What constitutes “good” and “bad” writing in English and Turkish
- Plagiarism

### Instructor Survey and Workshop Methods:

After the student data was collected and analyzed, an instructor survey that targeted key aspects of the student results was conducted. This 17-question survey asked instructors to anticipate student

responses to duplicate questions from the student survey; evaluate the two sample essays from the student focus groups; and to rank characteristics of essays in English from most to least important. Instructors then attended a presentation and workshop, where data from the student surveys and focus groups was presented. Instructors discussed the findings of the study and were put into groups of 3 or 4 to brainstorm ways in which the results of the study could inform teaching practices.

## Results

A comparison of the student and instructor responses revealed five significant gaps in student and instructor perceptions. These gaps were found in the following areas: student experience writing in English in secondary school; the easiest and most difficult aspects of writing in English; plagiarism and collusion; perceived differences in writing in English versus writing in Turkish; and reactions to the two sample essays in English. The study was designed “to cast a wide net,” and as a result a tremendous amount of data was harvested. However, this paper will focus on the student and instructor reactions to the two sample essays in English.

Qualities of a ‘good essay’ in Turkish vs. English, and reactions to the two sample essays:

Though the students in the focus groups showed awareness of key differences between ‘good’ writing in English and Turkish, they were unable to subsequently recognize these attributes when asked to read and evaluate the two sample essays. In the focus groups, when asked to determine the qualities of a good essay in Turkish and English, the students indicated that a ‘good’ Turkish essay contains impressive vocabulary, complicated ‘unique’ sentences, a flexible structure, and a thesis that is revealed at the end of the paper. As one student explained, ‘In Turkish, they expect you to be progressively more and more effective. I mean, towards the end it should be like, WOW!’ The students also emphasized a perceived lack of rules in Turkish writing: ‘We haven’t heard of any specific rules; there are none.’

The focus groups also suggested that the Turkish language might not be suited to the essay format, because Turkish writing is expected to be indirect. During the conversation, one student claimed, ‘Turkish writers are more general (superficial). I mean, they cannot convey their message.’ Another student concurred: ‘Turkish is ill-suited to the [English language] essay format.’

In contrast, the students primarily focused on organization and the demonstration of ‘rules’ as the two main qualities of a good essay in English. One rule that the students emphasized was placing the thesis at the beginning of the essay. The students also touched upon the importance of creating an outline or plan for the essay. As a student claimed,

In English writing classes, first we make a layout. We mention the idea, more or less, the number of issues to be touched upon... like a road map. We say it at the beginning. I do not recall doing that in Turkish writing. I mean, I have never seen a situation where it was required.

The students seemed to have a clear idea of how English writing is structurally and linguistically different than Turkish writing. However, when asked to evaluate the two sample essays in English, the students overwhelmingly preferred the essay that displayed the attributes they identified as good qualities in Turkish writing, but not the attributes they identified as good qualities of an English essay. In fact, when the students in the focus groups and the instructors were asked to evaluate the two sample essays, a significant gap was revealed.

The essays were selected because they were of comparable average level but displayed distinctly different rhetorical structures. Sample 1 displayed characteristics of Turkish rhetoric, while Sample 2 reflected English rhetoric. Both the students and the instructors were asked to read each of the essays and determine which was the stronger essay and why.

Seventy-five percent of the students in the focus groups believed Sample 1 was the stronger of the two essays. When asked to explain their choice, they focused on what they saw as a strong use of ‘academic’ language and more sophisticated vocabulary. One student explained, ‘It’s higher quality; I think there is a better use of language.’ Another student explained her justification for choosing sample 1 saying, ‘It is like an article. Of course its language is more complicated. Like a master’s work.’ These features do not reflect the issues of organization or adherence to rules that the students themselves identified as the qualities of a good essay in English. In fact, the students focused on two of the attributes they believed characterized a good essay in Turkish: impressive vocabulary and sophisticated language.

In contrast, the students overwhelmingly viewed Sample 2 as weak. They believed it contained too much information, and was too repetitive, ‘boring,’ and ‘less genuine.’ One student believed that the essay had been ‘deliberately extended’ to make it meet a length requirement.

Conversely, when asked to do the same task, all but one instructor identified Sample 2 as the stronger paper. The instructors believed that the qualities that made Sample 2 the stronger essay included its thesis, structure and organization, use of source material, use of summary, and use of citations. They saw the essay as more accessible and more like an essay (in terms of thesis, structure, and support) than Sample 1. One instructor explained, ‘[Sample] 2 is actually an essay, by which I mean that it addresses an issue and argues a point using sources. [Sample] 1, while written in more sophisticated English, is just a regurgitation of what, for any Turk, is common knowledge.’ In stark contrast to the students, instructors found Sample 2 to be more sophisticated and to have a stronger use of language and vocabulary. One instructor noted, ‘[Sample 2] interacts with the source in order to support the argument, [because it has] more sophisticated vocabulary, uses keywords/concepts from the text, [has] clearer language, more specific details/support, uses signal phrases and in-text citations, [has] clearer transitions, [and it’s] easier to follow the logic of this paper.’ Instructors identified Sample 1’s weaknesses as: language, grammar, and vocabulary; lack of citation; underdeveloped thesis; lack of focus; lack of development; lack of support; lack of coherency; based on opinion; and contained frequent generalizations.

This exercise indicated that the students and the instructors had vastly different conceptions of the qualities of strong writing in English, and that the students could not necessarily recognize the qualities of a strong paper in English. In addition, the students placed a large amount of importance on the use of complex vocabulary and sophisticated-sounding ‘academic’ language, possibly because these are the traits that students identified as most significant in Turkish writing. The students overwhelmingly seemed to privilege language over issues such as argument, organization, support, and citation in selecting Sample 1 as the stronger paper, while the instructors chose Sample 2 as the strongest, because it better conformed to their expectations of an essay in English.

## Outcomes from the Instructor Workshop

An overview of the survey and focus groups results was presented to instructors, and in the subsequent workshop, instructors were placed into groups of 3–4 to discuss how this information could inform better teaching practices, and to generate ideas for activities informed by the study. In this workshop, all instructor groups identified a need to more clearly establish expectations for academic writing in English, and to do so within the context of identifying rhetorical differences in English and Turkish writing. Instructors were particularly struck by the student focus group responses to the two student essays, and suggested that similar essays be used in the classroom to help students recognize how their knowledge, experiences, and expectations of the characteristics of effective academic writing in Turkish might influence their conceptions of effective writing in English. Instructor groups also suggested incorporating elements of the study into their classrooms. One group suggested that instructors should gauge their students’ experiences with writing at the beginning of the semester by conducting surveys, while another group proposed conducting essay characteristic ranking activities modeled after the study. During the discussion at the close of the workshop, the instructors agreed that a more productive, active student–instructor dialogue on rhetorical differences, expectations, and assumptions needed to be established in the classroom.

## Conclusion

This study collected a vast amount of information regarding Koç University student and instructor assumptions, expectations, and experiences. The student survey and the focus groups, the presentation, and the instructor survey and workshop enabled the instructors to identify key gaps between their expectations and assumptions towards student experience and behaviors and the students’ reported expectations, assumptions, and experiences. One significant gap that emerged in the study was the difference in student and instructor assessments of the two sample essays. The study suggested that although students were aware of the qualities of a successful essay in English, they were unable to identify the sample essay that displayed these qualities as the stronger essay, choosing instead the essay that displayed features that the students identified for strong writing in

Turkish. The study revealed areas where instructor expectations and assumptions deviated from the student reports of these areas, and enabled the instructors to collaboratively plan to address the gaps identified by the study.

Understanding the specific rhetorical situations, attitudes and experiences of ESL students in international contexts, and implementing teaching strategies based on concrete student-specific information will better prepare instructors to teach academic writing in English by identifying gaps between instructor and student assumptions; understanding student experience; highlighting problems students are prone to; and shedding light on areas where students need additional instruction.

This study highlights the need for more research in areas related to education and intercultural rhetoric in Turkey. Further investigation of writing instruction in Turkish secondary schools to examine curriculum, textbooks, and teacher training would promote a better understanding of how secondary education shapes Turkish college ESL writers. In addition, further examination of the rhetorical and linguistic structures of Turkish writing is needed, as are studies that look at how Turkish cultural rhetorical norms impact writing in English. Finally, a closer look at potential disparities in student-teacher expectations and assumptions of ESL writing on a larger scale could optimize teaching and learning.

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