

ACADEMIC WRITING IN ENGLISH MAJOR SOPHOMORES' VIEWPOINTS: A BATTLE BETWEEN LEARNING TO WRITE AND WRITING TO LEARN

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Abstract. Given the significance of academic writing in learning, the study digs into the definition of learning, identifies the elements impacting the acquisition of language in terms of writing skills, and places particular emphasis on the sophomores' viewpoints on the distinctions between learning to write and writing to learn. To adjust a student's writing and language learning, the approaches and strategies are optional for specific people.

Keywords: *Academic writing, English Major Sophomores, learnt to write, write to learn.*

1. Introduction

During the developmental process of a second language in general and English in particular, it is common for learners to get acquainted with the sentence pattern at first, then move from simple to complex gradually, taking small steps to introduce the concepts of sentence structure such as the article, noun or verb, etc. Throughout the learning period, learners may find difficulty in learning writing skills even though they have already been competent in other skills.

In theory, this research can provide readers with the viewpoints of English Major Sophomores regarding the perspective of the learning-to-write process, especially in academic writing, including the definition of learning, factors affecting the learners' development and the learning strategies for writing as well the approaching methods for writing to learn in higher education. It can be beneficial for students with the need to improve the quality of their writing, particularly the topic of learning to write strategies.

Practically, the secondary research would contribute to the understanding of readers about the two disciplines of academic writing and the application of various strategies for better performance and a more efficient learning process.

2. Learning definition

First, we need to understand 'what is learning?'. There are many definitions regarding learning such as "the process of gaining knowledge and expertise" (Knowles, 1973), a transformative process of taking in information and combining with individual experiences to make changes based on 'input, process, and reflection' (Bingham & Conner, 2010)

Throughout their academic lives, students have the opportunity to learn and acknowledge new concepts and information in different contexts and circumstances which result in the difference in the individual experience. Therefore, learning something new is the understanding of the new concepts leading to the change in cognition and realization of the learners and sometimes people find it difficult to explain things reasonably and directly for others to understand fully.

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3. Factors affecting the development of academic writing in a second language

Second-language learners commonly have difficulties with academic writing in English. Some of these difficulties are sentence-level problems with grammar and vocabulary. However, a special feature of academic writing is the importance of discourse organization, in this research, we are going to focus on two main factors, namely transfer factors and developmental factors.

Transfer Factors

The organizational patterns of English expository writing written by second-language writers will differ from those of native speakers, according to Kaplan (1972). According to his view, the learner is borrowing the mother tongue's and culture's rhetorical structure. Kaplan even contends that "each language and each culture has a paragraph order unique to itself".

It may be claimed that the paragraph is "turning and turning in a widening gyre" as it progresses. The topic is never directly seen; instead, the circles or gyres revolve around it and present it from a variety of tangential angles. As opposed to what they are, things are accompanied by the development of what they are not. Again, a reader in English would find such a progression difficult and needlessly indirect in a modern English paragraph.

There are cultural and linguistic differences that are not consistent, but only relative.

Developmental Factors

The developmental model of first language writing with sentence-level skills, such as grammar, punctuation, and vocabulary are learned as the basis. Meanwhile, individual awareness and learning strategies, coherence, and cohesion are developed afterward. Academic writing seems to change over time with experience and age due to the tools and techniques applied uniquely, each time they learn something new.

One of many features influencing the process of language learning is the age of acquisition, as it is more active and efficient for young learners, especially the sooner they get to learn the languages, the better performance they have toward the development of their learning. Besides, regarding experience and the development of discourse skills, Noid (1981) reported that the 13-year-olds tend to do more organizational and transitional revisions than the 9-year-olds. Additionally, she points out that experienced writers make global revisions at the discourse level first, then local revisions at the sentence level. Unskilled writers, on the other hand, typically make changes at the sentence level to alter their prose to follow the conventions of written English.

Another point relating to the performance of learners is their aptitude and intelligence. Although individuals have different kinds of abilities and different viewpoints towards writing, the relationship between aptitude and the potential for second-language writing is essential as the quality of academic writing is not only at the sentence level but also the understanding of naturalness and rationality. Apparently, not all students have the natural talent for writing and their performance at school may be various and unique due to their writing styles.

Moreover, while the second language learners' speaking skills are rather potential, their writing skills are not necessarily as compromised and as competent. As the students only aim to finish their academic assignments without any grammatical mistakes. "So absolute is the importance of errors in the minds of many writers that 'good writing' to them means 'correct writing', nothing more" (Shaughnessy, 1977). The developmental factors are crucial as they define the writing styles as well as the learning strategies of the learners, not only a school but also at work. At different periods, people receive different types of studying and learning toward a new language in general and English in particular. The educational system for academic writing at school is rather defaulted and not always suitable for every individual as the course at school mainly focuses on the sentence level of writing and errors relating to grammar and vocabulary.

Furthermore, during the developmental process, learning styles also play an essential role in the studies

of academic writing since it is also in line with the learners' motivation, attitudes, preferences, and goal orientation. The development process always needs direction and goals to achieve which requires learners to obtain appropriate learning strategies for different individuals leading to variation in the developmental process. The developmental process of academic writing is associated with the learners' goal orientation and their purpose of learning to write more efficiently, therefore, people may go with their own pace and writing styles, due to their preference in the learning strategies and their performance at school. Some students only aim at gaining proper scores for the academic writing assignment so their learning styles may be sufficient, whereas some are more ambitious with their target for achievement, which they would need.

4. Learning to write

Written Instructions

In order to clarify unclear or perplexing phrases, spoken instructions should be added to written instructions, which can be a helpful source of information all through the writing process.

One of the first places where students will receive writing advice is in the course manual. The student responsibilities (in relation to assessment) section of the course handbook I looked at for this inquiry included a range of suggested forms of assessment on the course, assessment regulatory requirements, instructions on how to submit assignments, a description of plagiarism and unfair practices, a warning about them, and assessment criteria for tasks as well as essays (Education Handbook: 48-52).

Similarly, module handbooks provide more thorough information on certain assignments. The Teaching Creatively with New Technologies module handbook outlines the guidelines for various written assignments, including an essay, an online discussion, and a project report (4); advice for choosing topics (in a third-year module, students have a selection of subjects rather than a strict assignment); specific marking criteria for the writing tasks (7-9); and submission guidelines (9).

Supplementing written instructions with other types of information regarding expectations, such as spoken instructions from teaching and learning development professionals, is necessary to meet the assumption that student writing is a "transparent medium of representation."

Oral instructions from teaching staff

Higher education students can also learn to write by listening to their course instructors' spoken instructions; frequently, this information completes or clarifies the written assignment brief. Students stated that this material can occasionally be essential to comprehend the requirements of the task, can also be in conflict with the written directions, and frequently varies significantly amongst instructional staff members.

Practically speaking, the way universities set up the delivery of courses and modules is partly to blame for the confusion students encounter when it comes to academic writing.

Written feedback

Students who receive written feedback can start to comprehend what is expected of them by their audience. In terms of behaviorism, this approach to teaching writing can be described as operant conditioning (Thorndike; Skinner): Students act (write in a certain way), then they encounter a consequence that will either cause that behavior to replicate itself (for example, optimistic reinforcement from a high grade) or a consequence that will motivate a change in attitude (positive punishment in the form of a low grade).

Several issues come from this kind of learning, even though it aids students in understanding the demands of their audience(s). First, the timeliness of feedback is critical; according to students, this occurs frequently and prevents them from implementing ideas on the following pieces of work. From a pedagogical perspective, the instructors who were contacted acknowledged this issue, although they attributed it to institutional limitations related to timetabling and staff contractual obligations. Additionally, because of illegible handwriting (which should not be understated as a communication barrier), the use of unclear phrases and symbols, and a lack of agreement among students regarding the objectives of a task, students

frequently struggle to understand comments. Similar to grades, feedback on students' work can range from detailed remarks on language and topic to more structured criticism using a rubric.

Lillis (2001) suggests that teachers use a "talkback" method, where the text is seen as something that is provisional, in the creation, and whose elements are thus still to be examined, in an effort to solve some of the inadequacies of feedback. Lillis uses "talkback" as a written assessment tool, but the word "talk" stimulates thinking about the ways in which authors discuss their work with each other; oral feedback from other resources can also be a useful tool in the writing process.

Modeling

Finally, students pick up writing skills by imitating "successful" academic writers in their subject. Both professionals and peers frequently request examples of excellent essays so then students can grasp what instructors look for in academic writing and copy effective writing. Students strive to emulate these authors' language and stylistic decisions in practice.

Unfortunately, some students discover that copying the tone and vocabulary of professional academics makes their writing less comprehensible and cohesive; when reading undergraduate work, they discover that the language is opaque or unclear. Students will say that they made their linguistic decisions in order to sound "intellectual" or "intelligent" when asked about their discursive choices. In order to encourage students to write in their own voices and engage in what Elbow refers to as "freewriting," teachers try to model this behavior for them (1973). This exercise encourages creative expression and enables authors to simply communicate ideas and views on the subject without concern for grammatical rules or the needs of an audience for a predetermined short length of time. The job then begins during the editing phase, when the writer refines, expands, and pares the language to suit the requirements of the text's aims. Students who engage in this activity report that not only is freedom freeing, but it also helps them articulate their ideas and arguments more efficiently. This method is used when a writer gets "stuck" or "locked" and needs the writing process to be a tool for cognitive comprehension of the message being attempted to convey.

5. Writing to learn

What is Writing to Learn?

Writing assignments typically fall into one of two categories when we look at how Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) has been implemented at various universities: writing to learn (WTL) and writing in the disciplines (WID). Between the first two more typical categories of writing tasks, there is a third one called writing to engage (WTE).

Note that instructors may combine these groups and prescribe writing that satisfies each of their objectives. But more frequently, teachers decide to emphasize one of these forms of writing.

Writing-to-learn exercises are typically brief, spontaneous, informal, and low-stakes writing assignments that aid students in thinking through important topics or ideas covered in a course. These writing assignments are frequently given as short, outside-of-class assignments or are timed to last no longer than five minutes.

This resource provides a wealth of information on writing to learn (WTL), including a thorough justification, examples, and logistical advice. Writing-to-learn activities are essential to many WAC programs since they best achieve education goals through writing.

A Fuller Definition of Writing to Learn

Writing fosters critical thinking and learning, according to both theorists and practitioners (See Adams, 1973; Applebee, 1985; Britton et al., 1975; Bruner, 1975; Emig, 1977; Herrington, 1981; Odell, 1980; and Parker, 1985 in the citations below.) In their "Introduction" to *Language Connections: Writing and Reading Across the Curriculum*, Toby Fulwiler and Art Young (1982) provide the following explanation:

Writing to communicate, or what James Britton refers to as "transactional writing," refers to writing with a purpose, such as informing, educating, or persuading. It's not the same writing to learn. In order

to objectify our impressions of reality, we write to ourselves as well as communicate with others. This "expressive" language's main purpose is not to facilitate communication but to organize and portray experiences for our own comprehension. In this sense, language gives us a special method of knowing and serves as a tool for exploration, meaning-making, and comprehension.

Syrene Forsman (1985) makes a similar conclusion in "Writing to Learn Means Learning to Think," although she focuses on a practical justification for writing to learn rather than a theoretical one:

As educators, we may either sentence our pupils to mindless mechanical actions or encourage their capacity for thought. Students will become stuck at the lower levels of cognition if their readiness for more complex thought processes is ignored in favor of cramming more facts and statistics into their heads. However, regardless of their age, students can gain a significant amount of mental capacity if they are encouraged to practice a range of thought processes in the classroom. One of the best methods to improve thinking is through writing.

An excellent early source on writing to learn is Robert P. Parker and Vera Goodkin's *The Consequences of Writing* from 1987. Following a thorough discussion of the theoretical connections between language, particularly writing, and learning, these formative evaluation writing-focused projects in entomology, clinical nursing, psychology, and mathematics, all of which had the same outcomes: students gained a deeper understanding of the subject matter while also practicing some features of discourse for the target discourse community. Even though the primary objective of writing to learn is to help students become better learners, writing to learn can nevertheless have additional beneficial benefits on students' development as effective communicators.

Technology Use for WTL Activities

WTL activities of all kinds can be modified for in-class writing if you instruct in a computer-equipped classroom, if students are allowed to bring tablets or laptops to class, or if they have convenient access to computers from outside class.

What Sorts of WTL Activities Can Be Performed in a Computer-Supported Classroom?

- + Explain and react to the readings
- + Summarize the main ideas from the previous class.
- + Clarify any unclear aspects in the reading or in a class by posing problems based on the course material
- + Organize writing or speaking assignments.
- + Find potential customers
- + Practice assignment and project formats
- + Keep track of observations over time.
- + Explain crucial concepts.
- + Round-robin remarks are recorded for inductive learning.
- + Prepare group response forms.
- + Record peer review of ongoing drafts.

Alternatives for Evaluating WTL Assignments

Writing-to-learn tasks are not graded for correctness since they are casual and frequently impromptu. The work is instead swiftly read by teachers or peers to get a rough idea of what kids comprehend and don't comprehend.

The following alternatives are recommended as most professors are unable to review and comment on each WTL exercise that students achieve:

- + Occasionally use the WTL warm-up at the start of class as a quiz. Comment briefly on students' understanding of a reading assignment or important ideas by picking up a single piece of paper or taking a quick look at a computer screen.
- + Pick up WTL materials every day or every other day from five to ten pupils. Don't read a single word; instead, skim to find assignments that students might struggle with, such as readings that became bogged down in class debate or pages with lots of writing.
- + To highlight specific entries, use highlighters or different colored ones. A particular hue denotes an "excellent concept," another "consider exploring this idea as a paper topic," still another "come back to this idea again and study it in greater detail," and so forth.
- + Walk around the classroom and read over the shoulders at the start and conclusion of class while learners are writing. If your kids are using computers to write, this strategy is very simple. Take a break to chat with or make a note about the writing of 3–4 pupils. If students object to you reading over their shoulders, ask them to choose a few recent WTL tasks and set those aside for you to gather and briefly read.
- + To be reviewed by you, have the students choose their best or most thought-provoking WTL writing.
- + Ask pupils to introduce one or two peers to their WTL activities.
- + Students should email you the WTL writing that comprises their queries regarding the course topic.
- + Students should be asked to publish controversial questions or summaries/analyses of readings on an online forum or electronic bulletin board for the benefit of the class.

Logistical Tip: Always instruct pupils to utilize loose-leaf paper rather than a spiral-bound notebook. While students might lose some of their writing, teachers can more easily select certain pages for evaluation.

6. Discussion

The purpose of this research is to identify the differences in academic writing for two different purposes which are learning to write and writing to learn. The distinction between learning to write and writing to learn, regarding the aspects of methods in order to improve the performance of academic writing includes the difference between the purposes, the aim, the learning styles as well as the approaching methods of the two disciplines of writing. While the process of learning to write can begin with sentence level at first and the discourse skills may be developed afterward in line with the language learning process, the procedures for writing to learn focus on the efficiency and effectiveness of the learning methods. Additionally, learning to write contains factors both objective and subjective as it concentrates on the changes or the development of the present writing skills, whereas writing to learn mainly depends on the learners themselves since it is about the learning process to obtain knowledge in the courses. Despite the differences, both learning to write and writing to learn may share some similarities regarding the aspect of influencing students' learning behavior, learning strategies, and the future aim for further development.

7. Conclusion

In summary, the study digs into the definition of learning alongside identifying the factors influencing the language learning process in terms of writing skills and emphasizes the sophomores' perspectives about the differences in learning strategies for learning to write and writing to learn. However, the methods and strategies are alternatives and optional for individuals so as to make changes to the student's writing and language learning.

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