

SHARING TEACHING EXPERIENCES IV

**TELLC Workshop:
Teaching English Language, Literature
and Culture, Volume 4**

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Departament de Filologia Anglesa i de Germanística
Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona

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SARA MARTÍN ALEGRE. PREFACE: ONCE MORE

The papers now in the hands of the reader were written for the fifth and sixth TELLC (Teaching English Language, Literature and Culture) workshops, celebrated, respectively, in November 2018 and January 2020. There was no edition in 2019 simply because our school (the Facultat de Filosofia i Lletres of the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona) decided to extend teaching to Fridays in 2018-19. TELLC had to be, therefore, rescheduled for the January period between semesters. I was myself once again the organizer. Having now reached its sixth edition, I can safely say that TELLC is consolidated as an integral part of our Department's culture. I must thank, then, my colleagues, for supporting the initiative, which started back in 2014. Everyone who attended the meetings was satisfied and all commented, once more, on how necessary the workshops are. I do feel, then, more than sufficiently encouraged to go on.

Not all participants, however, have chosen to develop their oral presentations into written work, which is why the 2018 and 2020 editions have resulted in just a small selection of papers, comprising about one fourth of all presented. The main novelty this time, as you will see, is the participation of the German section. One word of warning: the papers here published are not intended to be the same type of scholarly article published in the many excellent journals devoted to teaching language and Literature, among which I must name the *Bellaterra Journal of Teaching & Learning Language & Literature* (<http://revistes.uab.cat/jtl3/index>), edited by UAB colleague Melinda Dooly. I believe that many teachers do want to discuss their teaching but feel that, since pedagogy is not their research field, they need to make an extra effort to master the specific bibliography and academic jargon required by specialized publications. This effort may be too intensive, given our time constraints, which means that very few teachers end up publishing academic work about their own teaching practice. My aim in organizing TELLC and publishing the corresponding booklets is far more modest: it consists of allowing teachers to communicate as if in

conversation for, after all, this is what workshops are for. This does not mean, I believe and sincerely hope, that the papers here reproduced are in any way less relevant (or useful) than other kinds of scholarly work. They are at least as relevant, if not more.

Enjoy!!

March 2020

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JORDI JANÉ-LLIGÉ. PROPOSALS FOR A TFG (TREBALL FINAL DE GRAU) IN THE FIELDS OF GERMAN AND ENGLISH LITERATURE FROM A COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE.

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ABSTRACT: The origins of the comparative perspective in Literature have to do with the wish to overcome the national borders and to get a more universal insight into the history of Literature and literary writing. The comparative perspective is nowadays understood and practiced in several ways, as Gisela Sapiro points out: comparing the literary system with other social systems, comparing different national literary systems with each other, analyzing originals and translations, etc. In order to motivate our students to get an understanding both of the rich German literary tradition and of the comparative perspective, in this paper I will present the structure of our literature course. This is based on the description of a period of history, i.e. interwar literature, and the analysis of the different literary movements (authors, works...) of the time, i.e. Kafka, T. Mann, Brecht, Rilke, Stefan Zweig, Joseph Roth, Döblin, Benjamin, etc. On the other hand, I will make some proposals for a TFG focusing especially on the Literature written in German and in English.

KEYWORDS: Comparative Perspective, Translation, Literature in German, Literature in English, TFG.

Comparison belongs to the very first steps that lead to effective learning and defines the methodology of any academic activity. Studying and analysing foreign languages and/ or Literatures—as is the case in our *Departament de Filologia Anglesa i de Germanística*—fundamentally means implicitly or explicitly comparing words, structures, texts, themes, genres, authors, literary movements and historical periods, to mention the central topics of comparison.

The origins of the comparative perspective in Literature have to do with the desire to overcome national borders and to gain a more universal insight into the history of Literature and literary writing. After long discussions held by scholars throughout the decades about the methodology and scientific goals of the discipline, corpus, etc., today the comparative perspective is understood and practiced in several ways, as Gisela Sapiro (2011) points out: comparing the literary system with other

social systems; comparing different national literary systems with each other in terms of identifying literary invariants; analyzing originals and translations, etc.

In this paper, I will first present the comparative component in literary studies from the three approaches mentioned above, which actually define the teaching approach in my seminar on contemporary German Literature at the UAB. Secondly, I want to make some proposals for the production of *Treballs de Final de Grau* (TFG) in the fields of English and German Literature from a comparative perspective.

In order to grasp some concepts of my teaching philosophy in the subject of German literature, it is necessary to know that German Studies at the UAB is not a degree but a minor (the students have to take a minimum of 30 ECTS credits). Secondly, the students start learning German language from scratch, reaching at most a level of B1 at the end of their studies. The first and obvious consequence for the literature seminar is that we have to work with translations.

The limited offer of German courses—especially on culture and Literature—has a second immediate consequence on the design of the Literature seminar, namely the need of contextualizing authors and works not only in their historical context, but also within the German cultural and literary tradition. This undoubtedly means relating the literary system to other social systems (politics, philosophy, psychology, etc.) from a diachronic and a synchronic perspective.

Finally, teaching German Literature in our context inherently implies, as already noted, comparing it in most cases with our own literary tradition (Catalan and/ or Spanish) and in the case of most of our students comparing it also with the literary tradition of the English-speaking countries, since a great number of the German minor students are getting their bachelor's degree in English Studies. This can save time in general introductions to literary movements (i.e. to realism, symbolism, avant-gardes, etc.) and to historical facts or periods (i.e. inter-war period, Second War World, etc.) though it is still often necessary to clarify the similarities and the differences between two different literary traditions, for instance between German and British Romanticism, which are especially relevant in our course. The terms of comparison are in general connected with genres, forms and topics.

All these aspects could be seen as obstacles that hinder our main objective, namely delving into the German culture as much as possible. I think, however, that we should take advantage of these ‘issues’ and try to gain a wider perspective in our analysis. In fact, the comparative approach takes place in our context within the Western literary tradition and therefore we do not have to deal with big cultural gaps. This should encourage us to face bigger challenges later on in life.

1. Working with Translations (Lost in Translation?)

It is common to say—in defence of translation—that most of the greatest literary works in history have not been read in their original version but in translation. The dilemma to read an original work or its translation is in our case, however, not a real one, as previously stated.

The first important step to do in our course is to propose one specific translation of each selected work (in Catalan, in Spanish, in English or ideally in the three languages). The choice gives us the chance to speak about the quality of the translations, about the translators, about the changing translational rules throughout history, and about obsolescence in translation and retranslation, which are central aspects in literary activity. At this point, we have to stress that translators and translations are one of the most important pillars on which literary systems are based and that great writers have been great translators as well (Rainer Maria Rilke, Walter Benjamin, Peter Handke, Elfriede Jelinek, to name a few German writers and part-time translators).

1.1. Titles

A fun way, but not exclusively fun, to approach a translated work is paying attention first to the way its title has been translated, especially for those who have knowledge of the original language. Some translated titles have been controversial throughout history (the same thing happens to films). A good example is the title of the translation into Catalan and/or Spanish of Kafka’s novella *Die Verwandlung*, which was respectively *La metamorfosi* and *La metamorfosis*. Would it not have been more adequate to translate the title as *La transformació* and *La transformación*? (Hernández

& Llovet 2015). The discussion about this issue allows us to start analysing the work and its different interpretations based on the title.

In the case of Stefan Zweig's *Schachnovelle*, speaking about the translation of the title gives us the chance to introduce our students to the genre of this work—in German *Novelle*, in English *novella*—and its main features: the short length, the single plot, the few characters, the turning point, etc. Although there is a tradition of novellas in English literature, Zweig's *Schachnovelle* was translated into English as *The Royal Game*. On the contrary, the Catalan and Spanish literary traditions do not have a special label for this genre, the most suitable names being *novel·la curta* and *novela corta* respectively, so that the translations are in Catalan *Novel·la d'escacs* and in Spanish *Novela de ajedrez*.

Other titles give us the opportunity to speak about the content of the work, as seen with war in *Im Westen nichts Neues* by Erich Maria Remarque, translated into English as *All Quiet on the Western Front* and into Spanish as *Sin novedad en el frente*, both expressions coming from military jargon, like the German title. This novel, however, was translated into Catalan as *Res de nou a l'oest*, a neutral title probably chosen due to the lack of tradition for this type of jargon in Catalan. In other cases, the title may contain a play on words, as in the case of *The Importance of Being Earnest* by Oscar Wilde, whose ambiguity is somehow saved in Catalan in the translation *La importància de ser Frank*, but not in Spanish, in which it is called *La importancia de llamarse Ernesto*.

1.2. Genre

As already seen in the case of the *Schachnovelle*, genre has also to be taken into account when working with translations. Various aspects related to the history of literary genres in different literary traditions may play an important role in the proper interpretation of a literary work. Goethe's *Novelle*, for instance, plays an important role within the German literary tradition in determining the features of the genre in its German adaptation, so that posterior authors, such as Zweig and his *Schachnovelle*, have had this particular work in mind for their own productions. If we start classifying our literary works into the three main traditional genres, i.e. poetry, drama and prose,

first we have to remember the general rules that govern them within the Western tradition and then contrast them with the specific conventions that define the particular one, German in our case. Thus, German has its own particular version of the Spanish picaresque novel, born in the 16th century in Spain, which was developed during the 17th century in the specific genre called *Schelmenroman*.

The linguistic component—the way the different genres conceive and use language—is a central issue in the structuring of genres as well as in translation, obviously, and must be remembered during the analysis of translated works. The impact of translation, in this sense, is very diverse depending on the genre: in poetry, for instance, there are physical elements of the language like rhythm, rhyme, and phonetics (i.e. alliteration) that have to be considered essential in constructing the sense of a poem; also the length of the words and of the verses, etc. are relevant elements. Poetry may be the most affected genre by translation and poetry translators very often have to face the dilemma of whether to respect the form or the content of a poem.

Most likely not to the same extent, prose narrative and drama are linguistically affected by translation as well, obviously: the syntactical component—the structure of the sentence, for instance—is crucial in the narrative genre, also the use of a more nominal style, or a more verbal style. Finally, the different registers and the spoken language are decisive in the configuration of the language on stage.

2. Literary System versus Other Systems

The literary tradition plays an important role in shaping literary texts, as we have already seen, and specific literary conventions have to be observed for a better understanding of every single work. We have previously spoken as well about the need in our literature seminar to properly contextualize the literary works that we analyse in the historical context that surrounds them. Since we concentrate on contemporary authors and movements, it seems to be especially relevant to describe the political, economic and social systems correctly that have been interplaying with the literary system throughout the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century. Political, economic and social issues, concepts, and values play an important role in shaping

literary discourse in our contemporary world, and seem to have substituted the role played in the past by religion, philosophy and aesthetics (Luhman 1984, 1994). The writer's engagement with society, and in general the artist's engagement, is an important aspect of literary activity nowadays. The commitment of the writer—very often of political or social nature—and the importance of the literary market and its marketing strategies—obviously of an economic nature—are central elements in structuring contemporary literary systems. The analysis of these elements requires a profound debate about literary and artistic autonomy in our contemporary world and have to be taken into account in our classes.

An interesting exercise in this sense is to observe the biography of the writers we concentrate on in our seminar, and to realise that most of them were not exclusively professional writers and had to work simultaneously in very different areas. Even Kafka, whose entire life was dedicated and justified by Literature, worked as a lawyer in an insurance company where he wrote meticulous reports on workers' accidents, very successfully indeed, so that his work was really appreciated by his bosses. Joseph Roth, the author of the *Radetskymarsch* and *Hotel Savoy*, was a journalist and worked for several newspapers in Austria and Germany; Alfred Döblin, the author of *Berlin Alexanderplatz*, was a physician, like Gottfried Benn, etc. Only very few writers could make a living solely off writing.

3. Comparative Literature

It is impossible to understand the evolution of a literary system—the German one, for instance—without taking into account the influences that other literary systems have had on it throughout history. From the perspective of the polysystem theory (Even-Zohar 1979), national literary systems alternate strong periods of self confidence in which the literary production from within dominates over translation and is even able to cross national borders—like the Baroque period in Spain, or the Romantic period in Germany—with weak periods in which the influence of imported translated literature is crucial—like the Baroque period in Germany, or the Romantic period in Spain. So, just to name a couple of examples, the influence of the Spanish picaresque novel on the evolution of the German novel in the 17th century is

undeniable (Grimmelshausen 1669), as already mentioned, as well as the influence of Shakespeare's theatre on the birth and evolution of an autonomous German theatre in the 18th century.

Inversely, the novel genre called *Bildungsroman* that Goethe established in 1795 with his *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* (*Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship*), later spread all over the world. Based on the description of a protagonist's maturing from childhood to adulthood after overcoming all kinds of challenges along the way, this work has inspired novels like *Jane Eyre*, *Tom Sawyer*, *To Kill a Mockingbird* and *The Catcher in The Rye* just to name a few examples coming from the English speaking world.

4. Proposals for a TFG

The perspective adopted in our Literature seminar provides an interesting approach to Literature that can be very attractive for the production of a *Treball de Final de Grau*. The analysis can be carried out diachronically—as is the case of the examples taken into account so far—even with contemporary authors or works: it is possible, for instance, to analyse Kafka's influence on posterior authors belonging to the English speaking world, like George Orwell, Ray Bradbury, or J.M. Coetzee. It is possible as well to describe the influence of Brecht's political theatre on the evolution of political theatre in the UK or the USA. Inversely, as well, it can be very interesting to observe the influence of authors of the so called lost generation on contemporary German Literature.

However, it is also possible to adopt a synchronic perspective and describe what happens in two (or more) different literary systems at a certain point in history. Interesting topics are, for instance, analysing female characters in the novels of the 19th century in different literary systems; describing the role played by female writers within literary systems at a certain point of history; observing the specific features of German and English realism or the emergence of avant-garde movements in two different countries. One very interesting topic that has already been treated in some TFGs in our Department is the comparison of war Literature (written in German and in English) from the interwar period (1918-1939).

Due to the great dimensions of these areas of research, it seems best for our students first to define their interests and goals in research and then choose two emblematic works of Literature for the specific analysis. Comparison, as already said at the very beginning of this paper, leads us to deeper knowledge and understanding of literary writing. Doing the *Treball de Fi de Grau* about one of these topics can represent, for the students of the English Department, an excellent opportunity to expand their understanding of literary writing and literature.

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SARA MARTÍN ALEGRE. A SENSE OF FAILURE: REACHING A LIMIT IN VICTORIAN LITERATURE

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ABSTRACT: Since 2009 I have been teaching and coordinating the compulsory second-year course 'Victorian Literature', so far with a high degree of satisfaction. The 2017-18 edition, however, was a far less positive experience for a series of reasons, beginning with errors in Gestió Acadèmica, and continuing with the low quality of the classroom assigned. The root of the poor atmosphere in class, however, was mainly the students' resistance to reading and participating in debate, together with the frequent absences. The disinterest I perceived—despite the commitment of a handful of students—affected negatively my own performance as a teacher, which grew increasingly self-doubting. My anxiety grew, perhaps out of proportion in view of the moderately good results, to the point that teaching became a chore not a pleasure. I hope that by narrating this troubled time here, I can invite other colleagues to share similar situations, as I finally found a (partial) solution in conversation with my co-teachers.

KEYWORDS: Teacher burnout, Victorian Literature, classroom space, students' reactions

When I founded the TELLC workshop, I was thinking primarily of sharing teaching innovations that might aid us to improve our task. Our hectic professional lives make it impossible to meet and discuss what works best in the classroom and I supposed that at least once a year this could be done productively. So far, the TELLC workshops have worked very well in this direction. This time, however, I am using my twenty minutes to present a negative experience of high impact in my life as a teacher.

Since 2009, at the onset of the new degree in English Studies, I have been coordinating and teaching the second-year course in Victorian Literature, which I have shared with three of our associate teachers, Laura Gimeno, David Owen, and Esther Pujolràs. I mention that they are associates because I wish to say publicly that, despite their time constraints, they have done a wonderful job. I have been extremely happy to be part of a team with them. Yet, at the same time, those time constraints, by no means their fault, are a major factor in what I wish to narrate. Basically, since we never

get a chance to meet as, in addition, we teach on different days, I never shared with them a negative situation that was also affecting them, though arguably not so deeply. What I assumed to be a personal problem turned out to be a professional problem affecting all teachers in Victorian Literature.

Victorian Literature is usually based on a selection of four to five novels, which always includes one work by Charles Dickens and one by a Brontë sister. We have been teaching either *Great Expectations* or *Oliver Twist*, and since it does work very well, Anne Brontë's *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*. The second half of the semester has varied, with some failed experiments—Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*—and texts that have been replaced after reaching that odd fatigue threshold any Literature teacher knows: R.L. Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, and Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*.

In the Spring of 2016, then, Esther Pujolràs proposed that we revised the syllabus and together we proposed to our colleague David Owen the following selection: *Great Expectations*, *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*, H. Rider Haggard's *King Solomon's Mines*, and Bram Stoker's *Dracula*. This was motivated by the rationale that the two 'popular' novels would complement the two more literary texts and also by the opportunity to teach very well-known texts from a fresh critical perspective, including Post-Colonialism and Gender Studies. David Owen accepted and, as we re-read the new texts, we three shared a number of memorable e-mail messages about how exciting the new novels were, specially the extreme, sexy *Dracula*. I had already taught Stoker's novel with Felicity Hand in an edition of the old yearly course *Gèneres del s. XIX* but I must say that I hadn't even read *King Solomon's Mines* before we chose it. When I did, I found it very good course material open to intense class debate.

Things started going wrong from the beginning, though. Gestió Acadèmica failed to distribute the groups equally despite my warning that mine (on Monday and Wednesday) should be the biggest once, hence Group 1. I found myself, then, with just 35 students in Group 3, while my associate colleagues coped each with 55 students or more (on Tuesday and Thursday). I must say that the person in charge of this matter at Gestió Acadèmica was extremely rude to me when I explained how unfair the situation was. You might think that having fewer students is a privilege but my point was that I

didn't want any privilege. I taught Victorian Literature from 11:30 to 13:00 after my Gender Studies lecture, which was fine, but I was given classroom 302, which I'm sure you already know for its reputation as one of the smelliest, nastiest spaces in our corridors. The first thing my students and I did every day was opening the windows as far as they would go, even in December. We often joked that the unbelievable smell would be for ever connected to Victorian Literature in our minds. It certainly is. I wonder how things have worked for other colleagues using the same appalling classroom.

Now, since this classroom was, besides, too big for 35 students, this resulted in a strange seating arrangement. The keenest 6 students occupied the front row and another group of 3 or 4, who turned out to be keener than I expected, sat at the back, in what surely must be the tenth row. Those in between formed a diagonal in sets of 2 or 3, giving an impression of absolute dispersal, with many empty seats in between. In comparison, my 25 students in Gender Studies occupied a compact space in 207, which made debate quite easy. In Victorian Literature, besides, 7 of the students were Erasmus, which is practically 25% of the 34, and could even be up to 50% on the days when local students' attendance was very low. This is important because some of the local students could not understand their foreign peers' accents—especially the British. I also had a group of 4 Korean students I could never connect with. Very stupidly, I made the mistake of not checking attendance every day as I have done in the previous years, which means that, on average, I had about 20 students in class, of whom about 10 took active part, half of them local and half Erasmus. Some of the Erasmus also attended my Gender Studies class, which made the difference between my teaching in each subject evident to them and most embarrassing to me.

The first shock came with the first of our two exams, which is an exercise that students prepare at home. That is to say, we give them the questions in advance and they write them in class. 9 out of the 34 students, almost 25%, failed; none came for review to my office. The second exercise, the paper proposal, was even worse: 12 students failed, 5 of them with marks between 2 and 0. I must explain that since 2009 we have produced a series of guidelines updated every year that cover every angle of

the proposal and the paper, including templates and examples. But there is still worse to come.

In the case of the first novel in the course, which this time was *The Tennant of Wildfell Hall*, the teacher is in charge of selecting passages for comment and leading class discussion. For the second novel, *Great Expectations*, this task is shared with the students. That is to say, I distributed the 60 chapters among the 34 students, and they were supposed to bring to class on a specific date one passage from their chapters with comments, then post it in our Campus Virtual forum. This means that for each session I could count on 7 or 8 students for classroom interaction. What happened is that even though this was a compulsory activity, in some sessions none of the students supposed to help me was in the classroom. Of course, I had my own passages ready at hand but it was awkward.

Then, the same situation was repeated with *King Solomon's Mines* and *Dracula*; in this case, students are supposed to contribute passages from secondary sources. I was so distressed that I even asked my students whether they were boycotting me in some way. Those present in the classroom were surprised and denied that this was happening at all. One thing I can say is that in previous years this kind of student participation had worked very well and I have fond memories of sessions in which students' contributions magically connected and debate was very much enhanced. This time, however, not only were the absences too many but also the debate that did happen was rather low key.

Of course, the beginnings of the course, between September and October, were conditioned by the difficult political atmosphere connected with the failed referendum for Catalan independence, which had me personally very concerned and distressed. This problem, however, affected my two classes and whereas debate flowed well in Gender Studies, Victorian Literature was simply not working. I found myself coping very badly with the lack of attention, the body language expressing total disinterest, the fragmented distribution of the students in the classroom, and the nasty smell. I even noticed how my English varied from Gender Studies to Victorian Literature, as many more errors cropped into it when I taught this course.

I kept discussing the texts with the same handful of students every session and though sometimes this worked fine, there was a very low point one day when I had the clear impression that nobody was listening to me. I stopped in the middle of my presentation and declared, half angry and half tearful, that since nobody was interested I had plenty of work to do in my office and I would immediately leave. My students' reaction showed that, in their view, this was business as usual and there was nothing wrong going on—this was how they attended class. I took a deep breath and went on, I don't know how. I cannot recall whether this was during the introduction to *Dracula* because I have blotted out most memories of this course. I can tell you, however, that I had been invited to teach a seminar on Stoker's novel at the Universitat de Barcelona and I used the same material. What was received very warmly at UB provoked only boredom in class.

The final marks were not really terrible: there were 6 fails, and out of the 30 who passed, 13 were 'Notables' and 5 were 'Excel-lents' with even 1 'Matrícula d'Honor'. 9 were a Pass. The root of the problem, then, is the sharp division of the class between the 19 good students who attended regularly and the 15 poorer ones who attended sporadically and left visible gaps in the classroom's functioning and space. I am 100% sure that a smaller classroom, a more compact seating arrangement, and a nicer smell would have made a difference. The pity is that, though I ended up going for dinner with some of the Erasmus students, and I hope to meet some of the front-row local students again, even perhaps as TFG tutorees, the other half left a bitter after-taste. At the end of the second exam, I asked one of the regular absentees why she had stopped attending class. All she offered was a shrug of her shoulders and what I can only describe as a sneer.

Basically, then, by mid-semester teaching my favourite course had become a chore which I tried to endure with as much professionalism as possible. I knew already then that this would be the worst teaching experience of my life and I puzzled every single day why Gender Studies was working so well and Victorian Literature so poorly, since I was the same teacher. One of the Victorian students told me that some of her classmates had lost interest because English Studies was not their first choice but seeing the figures provided by Coordinator Elisabet Pladevall this does not seem to be

the case. There were days when I thought that the disaffected students were treating me with the contempt teens use with their parents, and then I felt like screaming that I am a well-known, respected scholar, which was not at all how I felt.

I truly believed that this was the beginning of the end of my pleasure in teaching and of my professional interest in students. You cannot begin to imagine my despair because I am a vocational teacher to the core. I saw the end of the tunnel one day, possibly already January, when I met David Owen and Cristina Pividori. David, who never complains about anything, showed a tiny little bit of dissatisfaction with his Victorian class. I checked then with Esther and, though I'm sure that personal matters were central in my own case, we discovered that the dynamics had been similar in the three groups. *Dracula*, which we assumed would be a tremendous hit was a failure, with only a small fraction of each class attending our lectures. One lesson I learned, then, from this mishap is that in the future I will try to share more regularly my feelings with my fellow teachers. If I didn't do that it was because I believed that bothering David and Esther, given their hectic schedules, was not acceptable. I told my husband about my distress, and some close friends, but what could they do?

Felicity Hand has always claimed that Literature teachers should change courses frequently if not every year, a view I did not share until recently. I wondered once that edition of Victorian Literature was over whether I was developing absurd feelings of possessiveness over this course, and whether I have been particularly unhappy precisely because I have been pouring too much personal energy in teaching it. These are books I love and I suffer much when I see students reject what I see as precious gifts. Also, to be honest, teaching Victorian Literature has a convenient side: I can save precious time for research by re-using PowerPoints and other documents, which I only need to refresh every year.

Invoking then the excuse of my being in the middle of writing a book which requires all my attention—which is true—I asked the BA and the MA Coordinators to offer all my teaching in the second semester, and thus avoid Victorian Literature. I have an engaging project for Gender Studies in the MA to produce with the students a guide about gender in 21st century science-fiction cinema. But, for the first time in many years, I won't be teaching Victorian Literature but Romanticism. This is still the

19th century and the course will include my beloved *Frankenstein* but, and this is an important but, I have decided to approach the course in a very different spirit. Besides, I will be teaching Romanticism to 64 sleepy students on Tuesdays and, oh my God, Fridays at 8:30. If I manage to interest them in Romantic poetry at that time of the day, then I'll be happy. If I can't accomplish the feat, then I'll have my MA class and my book to be happy about. I just need to disconnect from Victorian Literature and as they say in films when relationships start failing, 'take some time'. If only until 2019-20.

I have no problems acknowledging my personal silliness and will take any criticism you may forward for, after all, what am I if not a privileged teacher? However, I must say that teaching Literature is fast becoming an exercise in masochism particularly in compulsory courses. If it were up to me, I would happily supervise 20 TFGs rather than teach again a class in which 50% of the students refuse to connect with my teaching at all. So far, all the TFGs I have tutored have been very happy teaching experiences, with only one failure which also had, anyway, positive aspects. I have dramatically lowered my expectations for Romanticism, which possibly will contribute to a better functioning of the course, but there are also days in which I simply dread the thought of 64 indifferent faces looking at me with that mixture of boredom, disdain and condescension I saw some days in Victorian Literature.¹

Hopefully, what I'll narrate next TELLC 7 is the best experience ever of my life as a Literature teacher.

¹ I am revising this in March 2020, having already taught English Romantic Literature in 2019-20, and if I were to write the essay again I would most likely focus on the difference between teaching an elective course and a compulsory one. Although not as perceptible as in Victorian Literature, students' resistance to learning matters they don't care about was also visible in the course on British Romanticism.

ANDREW MONNICKENDAM. CAN WE, SHOULD WE, OUGHT WE TO TEACH CONTEMPORANEITY?

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ABSTRACT: In his essay, “On the Teaching of Modern Literature”, first published in the January-February 1961 edition of *Partisan Review*, Lionel Trilling discusses Columbia University’s reluctance to teach contemporary Literature. He proposes that students are happy to live without knowledge of the past, subsequently, in order to perform the task properly, they need to be immersed in the thoughts of Nietzsche and Freud, for starters. Trilling appears to be the disillusioned humanist who, aghast at the horrors of the post-war world, believes that studying past Literatures provides a Socratic space in which we can come to terms with modernity. Yet, right at the end, the image of the grumpy old professor takes a twist when he concludes that the whole purpose of the exercise has been “to confront those of us who do teach modern literature with the striking actuality of our enterprise”. In short, can we, should we, ought we to teach contemporaneity?

KEYWORDS: Literature, teaching, modernity, university, Lionel Trilling

“...a term essay is not a diary of the soul, it is not an occasion for telling the truth”

If we look at today’s schedule,² we see that most of our interesting papers talk about teaching praxis. Indeed, as we know full well, one of the attractions of this gathering is that we can talk about this subject without having to place it within a theoretical or administrative framework. Lionel Mordecai Trilling would have gladly attended, as he himself said, with or without irony is something that I leave you to make your own minds up about, “pedagogy is a depressing subject to all persons of sensibility” (Trilling 1980: 3). Of course, this is a typical litterateur’s trick, as if you deny the truth of the statement, you presumably confirm that you have no sensibility at all.

The next time you receive a message from your publisher informing you of the hundreds of copies your book has sold, ponder on Trilling and his successful collection of essays, *The Liberal Imagination* (1950). *The New Yorker* informs us that hardback

² This refers to TELLC 6, held on 31 January 2020.

sales soon reached 70,000, and paperback 100,000, adding that Trilling became an important personage in Cold War America. Can we imagine, seventy years on, that sales of a collection of essays on Literature could ever approach that extraordinary figure? Trilling, it should be noted, makes no effort to make criticism more accessible or 'sexier', to use a cliché. This phenomenon suggests several things about reading habits. First, they have certainly changed since then. It might mean that criticism has become too opaque for the ordinary reader, arguably only very popular biographies of literary figures could ever approach similar sales. Second, it suggests that common readers, to borrow Virginia Woolf's phrase, were much more erudite than today's, despite the flourishing of reading clubs. As Trilling points out in the essay I will discuss today, currently Keats is seen as a difficult poet, whereas his contemporaries did not believe him to be so. Teachers of Modernism know full well that when you explain to a class that Woolf or James Joyce wrote to make money and strived to be popular, such a statement will be met with certain suspicion. Attempts at convincing our students that the same applies to William Faulkner, and that a great way to understand *The Sound and the Fury* is to read his correspondence with his publisher on the issue of clarity will also receive a bemused response. Third, we should appreciate that literary, or, for that matter, art criticism could turn an academic into a public figure, even someone as tetchy as Trilling who professed not to like his name, his colleagues, or his profession. Perhaps the dinner-party scenes in Bennet Miller's 2005 biopic of Truman Capote provide an evocative image of that sophisticated New York that took over the mantle of cultural capital of the West from Paris. This is the circle in which Trilling and a few others moved, whereas we seem to have reverted to the material depths of Chaucer's Clerk of Oxenford. This represents a significant societal change. Few people nowadays would consider literary criticism a prestigious career let alone a lucrative one.

"On the Teaching of Modern Literature" contains many of Trilling's perennial preoccupations. In its early pages, he sets out the resistance of the professors in the English and Comparative Literature programme at Columbia to the teaching of contemporary Literature:

[...] is there is not to be found in the past that quiet place at which a young man might stand for a few years [...] in which he can be silent, in which he can *know* something [...] almost anything that has nothing to do with the talkative and attitudinizing present [...] (Trilling 1980: 5, original italics).

That sounds like the words of an old fogey, but let us leave that presumption on the sidelines and approach the question from another angle. What exactly does the “attitudinizing present” mean? I will answer this question in two parts. Trilling’s problematic term “liberal” has to be contextualized in its time and place. New York, where Trilling was born and died and spent his working life, is often defined as liberal in opposition to more conservative locations in the United States. As well as being sophisticated, it is more multi-ethnic, a city of immigrants; memoirs like Dalton Conley’s *Honky* (1961) give illuminating accounts of race. Politically, it tends towards the centre and centre-left, hence a New York Republican has a different agenda from his party colleague in Arkansas. In the context of McCarthyism, this socio-political divide was even more apparent. It is therefore the university, in this case, which becomes a refuge from the intolerance operative outside its gates. Columbia will not necessarily be Arcadia, but it can be a refuge. Trilling promoted the thinking mind over the mindless, oppressive present.

The situation is further complicated by the fact that many Central and Eastern European intellectuals fled their home continent to escape repression and death, either at the hands of Fascism or Communism, of Hitler or Stalin. Thus, the question of what Trilling and contemporaries understood by liberalism can become an intricate matter, but the most useful formulation of his political ideas would be that he belonged to the anti-communist left. Simple enough? Here’s *The New Yorker* again: “In Trilling’s time, many liberal anti-Communists insisted that membership in the Communist Party was a disqualification for teaching or for joining a labor union, and many liberal anti-anti-Communists vehemently disagreed” (Menand: online). I know that this looks unnecessarily complicated, but I would like to stress again the need to historicize not just events but concepts. In addition, and in order to make better sense of Trilling’s essay, it is worth noting that some of the figures he uses to back up his arguments have become bogeymen in the humanities since at least the time of

structuralism, notably Matthew Arnold, but also Sigmund Freud and Thomas Mann, to a lesser extent.

Let us develop a bit further this idea of the attitudinizing present, which might call to mind social media, or perhaps William Davies's *Nervous States: How Feeling Took Over the World* (2018), a study which extends Gustave Le Bon's late nineteenth-century studies of crowd psychology into the contemporary world of social media. Rebuffing contemporary Literature definitely looks quirky, especially in New York at that time, but deep-down lies the suspicion that, as an intellectual enterprise, it cannot be taught well if at all. Le Bon, Davies, and Trilling himself would readily admit that "attitudinizing" will, by its very nature, become an obstacle to acquiring knowledge if, as Trilling argues, most curriculums in the humanities assume "that the real subject of all study is the modern world". (Trilling 1980: 4) There might be very good reasons for that being the case, but Trilling points out one which sounds rather too familiar to some or many of us: that the majority of students are quite happy to live without any knowledge of the past, preferring instead to live in a fantasy world in which they naively believe that they are "at home in, and in control of, the modern world. [...] they respond to ideas with a happy vagueness, a delighted glibness, a joyous sense of power in the use of received or receivable generalizations" (Trilling 1980: 4). We have perhaps all experienced a strange feeling when reading exam scripts that our attempts explaining the modern world have been processed into glibness. Let us notice, however, that Trilling avoids the question of causation at this juncture.

The second reason for bypassing contemporary literature, Trilling surmises, comes from what he punningly labels its intense spirituality. By this he means that it is always asking us questions: "No literature has ever been so shockingly personal as that out time. It asks us if we are content with our marriages, with our family lives, with our professional lives, with our friends" (Trilling 1980: 7). That being the case, let us consider the opening words of Franz Kafka's "Metamorphosis" that describe Gregor as horrible vermin; the German "fand der sich in seinem ungeheuren Ungeziefer verwandelt" highlights the force of the metaphor more stridently than many English translations. Does "horrible vermin" signify the anti-hero, the working-class, or, more specifically for central Europe, the Jews? Or does it point its finger to familial

relationships, whether they be Kafka's own or as representative of a much broader bourgeois network? Fine, you might be saying, yet there is no reason why Trilling's objections should depress or worry us in the least. If we believe that our planet is endangered, for example, what is wrong with expressing a personal concern? Trilling articulates two dislikes here. One, that he has no wish to express publicly his own views on personal matters, something which is understandable in McCarthy times. Two, the danger arises when, in trying to teach contemporaneity, we become a gross distortion of the people we are supposed to instruct: we ineluctably join the ranks of the attitudinizers.

After much resistance Trilling informs us, Columbia relented and decided to teach contemporary Literature. For what follows, we should remember three points. First, as stated previously, Trilling worked in a comparative Literature programme. Second, we should bear in mind that although the essay itself was published sixty years ago, we are considering his thoughts garnered in the immediate post-war period, hence the references to contemporary Literature refer primarily to the European high Modernists. He nonchalantly states that after having acceded to student demands, he pondered what fun it would be to give them Yeats, Eliot, Joyce, Proust, Kafka, Lawrence, Tolstoy, or Henry James to be read for next week! Thirdly, what irritates Trilling is the fact he has to teach books for which he holds a special affection, above all *Ulysses*, *The Castle*, and *Remembrance of Things Past*, works that he has enjoyed "since early youth" (Trilling 1980: 7). This brings me to a subject that I wish I knew more about, namely, reading habits. I have found plenty of similar accounts of precociousness in diaries and memoirs of the pre-war period that suggest that intellectually challenging works had a very wide circulation. After all, Virginia's Woolf collection of reviews and critiques is called *The Common Reader*, and the title must indicate something, as many of the authors she analyses certainly do not match the taste of today's common reader.

Trilling proposes that the one way of overcoming the obstacle to attitudinization is to teach the subject properly, and this requires a two-level intellectual induction. There is undoubtedly a degree of condescension on Trilling's part when he admits that as a result of setting up the course curriculum in this way,

the students would receive Modernism “full in the face” (Trilling 1980: 7). However honest that confession may be, it drags us away from a highly articulate argument that goes as follows. Trilling’s first platform comprises three works without which, he argues, understanding modernity would be a hopelessly flawed enterprise. The first is James Frazer’s *The Golden Bough*, which might sound an odd choice beyond its links to T.S. Eliot. Trilling insists its influence was immense, particularly for the articulation of what he sees as both the savagery and beauty of the primitive (to use the term of the time) mind which challenges rationality, scientific endeavour, and similar enlightenment values. The second item on his reading list is Nietzsche’s *The Birth of Tragedy*, which likewise casts doubts on the validity of reason through outlining the nexus between the Apollonian and the Dionysian. The third text is Freud’s *Civilization and its Discontents*, a book which, he argues, asks whether we want to accept civilization and more specifically the restraints it imposes on the individual in order to maintain social cohesion.

Trilling labels these three texts “prolegomenal”, introductory texts for the first semester. He then assigns his class three literary texts. The first is Diderot’s iconoclastic *Rameau’s Nephew*; arguably the nephew is one of the first anti-heroes who calls into doubt or casts a shadow over intellectualism, rationality, science, the Enlightenment, call it what you will. Either by accident or on purpose, Trilling omits to explain how the nephew proposes that through teaching his pupils nothing, he is fact a good teacher because nothing will later have to be undone. Neither does he mention its strange history. Goethe translated the text into German in 1805, which, after the original manuscript had disappeared, was translated back into French in 1821. Briefly, the second is Dostoevsky’s *Notes from Underground*.

Trilling admits that his aim was to shock his students out of attitudinization and complacency, but his students’ papers show that he failed. Trilling’s liberalism, that word which I earlier stated caused so many problems, reveals, through this selection of texts across European culture, a common thread or argument: that since the Enlightenment itself and from the pen of its foundational figure, skepticism about science and rationality has always been part of canonical works, either in ironic form, as in the case of Diderot, or delivered in anger, in the case of Dostoevsky, or, in the

case of the three prolegomenal texts, not simply affecting elite circles but as the essential condition of modernity. He does not go so far as to say that we are all, by nature, anti-heroes, or artists in hell, but falls just short of that assertion. However, looking in the abyss had not worried his students, they simply saw that exercise as class material requiring the same process as any other, hence the epigraph at the top of the paper. I am sure that those of us who have taught contemporary courses have felt the same or similar.

To conclude, far from considering the exercise a failure, Trilling is not discouraged. This might appear odd. After all, Trilling's curriculum for modern Literature is based on the premise that modernity since its foundation has constantly questioned itself, subsequently the values that sustain civilization, including those that promote art, Literature, or science have simultaneously repressed the individual whilst promoting liberty and freedom from the heart of revolutionary France out to most parts of the world. The modern artist might live in a Baudelarian hell, however pleasurable at times it might be, but Trilling hypothesizes that if we really look at modernity, it is scary. Hence, he concludes

I venture to say that the idea of losing oneself up to the point of self-destruction, or surrendering oneself to experience without regard to self-interest or conventional morality, of escaping wholly from the societal bonds, is an 'element' somewhere in the mind of every modern person who dares to think of what Arnold in his unaffected Victorian way called "the fullness of spiritual perfection". But the teacher who undertakes to present modern literature to his students may not allow that idea to remain in the somewhere of his mind; he must take it from the place where it exists habitual and unrealized and put it in the conscious forefront of his thought. And if he is committed to an admiration of modern literature, he must also be committed to this chief idea of modern literature. I press the logic of the situation not in order to question the legitimacy of the commitment, or even the propriety of expressing the commitment in the college classroom (although it does seem odd!), but to confront those of who do teach modern literature with the striking actuality of our enterprise. (Trilling 1980: 27)

I have ended with such a lengthy citation in part because of its eloquence and also for its emphatic belief that teaching contemporary Literature fulfils a vital function in the post-Enlightenment world, a term which circumscribes his world both in terms of time and place. Trilling's enthusiasm emerges from being able to square a circle that the earlier part of his essay might have left observant readers perplexed. If we live in

an attitudinizing present with a student population fixated by the present, and if contemporary Literature obliges us to answer personal questions, there seems no way of escaping the inevitability that our classes will become little more than confirmation that the initial hypotheses have been proven, namely that the present age, and its educational institutions have become, *per se*, attitudinizing. Furthermore, the dull papers his students wrote for him simply reduce the room for manoeuvre. Yet I would propose that Trilling is reworking that eighteenth-century argument about indolence and industry. What makes the task worthwhile is not simply the result, poor in itself, but the energy it invests in the enterprise itself. As a teacher, therefore, Trilling is asking us not to give up or give in, but to continue an uphill struggle to really inform and instruct beyond the limits of contemporary reductionism. After all, if there is one institution which incapsulates Enlightenment idealism, it must be the university. We might all tire of being bombarded with that noxious superlative 'excellence', but hopefully in some instances, it might mean what it means.

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SONIA OLIVER & JENNIFER AMENT. DEVELOPING MATERIALS IN ENGLISH ACADEMIC WRITING: PREPARING UNDERGRADUATES FOR TFG COMPLETION

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ABSTRACT: Undergraduates face the challenge of writing an academic paper in order to complete the BA program. In this sense, this project requires new skills in terms of conventions in style and structure. In order to prepare them, our subject 'Advanced Writing' in the third year of English Studies Degree at the UAB aims to provide students with the suitable knowledge, strategies, and tools needed to succeed in academic writing (AW) in English L2. These writing skills are enhanced by the identification of AW features, the introduction to academic genres, the application of macro structures (moves) and the analysis of socio-pragmatic phenomena in specialized discourse such as, hedges, boosters and connectors. In order to achieve TFG quality writing we reinforced the practical side of AW by introducing specific tools throughout the 6ECTS course. In other words, undergraduates participated in peer review tutorials, critical reading sessions, follow-up writing exercises, in class intensive practice, group discussion and they received constant feedback from their lecturers. By focusing on the writing process, students were able to improve their written production over time. Therefore, our teaching methodology seems to suit our students' needs with effective writing skills to face the TFG challenge with more confidence in the following academic year.

KEYWORDS: Academic writing skills, TFG, English L2, Genre analysis, teaching methodology, students' needs.

Introduction

Advanced Writing is a 3rd year subject within the English Studies Degree in the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona (UAB). It is taught during the first semester of each academic year and it is a compulsory subject of 6 ECTS (European Credit Transfer System). In this paper, we will present the competencies, contents, and learning outcomes of Advanced Writing and we will explain the methodology and assessment applied aiming at providing our undergraduates with suitable academic strategies and skills to write in English L2. In this sense, our teaching philosophy believes in having a gradual approach to the contents and a steady difficulty in the assignments and tasks to be performed. In other words, there is a class progression where we "build blocks",

thus, in this paper, we will describe the main writing tasks and we will include examples of activities carried out by students inside and outside the AW classroom. In addition, we have compiled our students' opinions (voices) on what they found most difficult, interesting, challenging or motivating during this course in academic writing in English. Finally, we will share our reflections on the teaching practices and the preliminary outcomes of our tuition as well as drawing some conclusions on the suitable skills our 3rd year students in English Studies Degree need to “confidently” face the TFG (Treball de Fi de Grau/ BA Paper) writing challenge.

1. Advanced Academic Writing: Components

In this section, we will focus on our Advanced Writing subject key competencies or skills, its main contents and the expected learning outcomes.

1.1. Key Competencies or Skills

Our main concern when teaching Advanced Writing is to familiarize our students with its main academic genres leading to the TFG completion, namely, the abstract and the Literature Review (theoretical framework). Students have to make an effective use of Academic Writing (AW) features: vocabulary, grammar, nominalizations, passive voice, reporting verb and also master text structure and organization. In this sense, text cohesion and coherence are crucial, namely, dealing with signposting, connectors, linkers, sequencers, etc. In addition, we also describe and practice in class key sociopragmatic phenomena in academic discourse writing: hedges and boosters. It is important for students at this stage to know how to position themselves as writers within a text and to apply Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) proficiently. Reflecting on the rhetorical situation when writing is crucial to succeed in developing a suitable text or genre.

1.2. Contents

The contents of the Advanced Writing subject include: **a)** the identification and application of AW features (hedges, boosters, passive voice, nominalization etc.), **b)** paragraph writing structure consolidation: 1) topic sentence (main thesis), 2) subtopic

sentence, 3) supporting statements, 4) concluding sentences, **c)** academic genre production: abstract writing and Literature Review (LR) (draft and final version writing), **d)** IMRD (Introduction/Methods/Results/Discussion) structure linked to TFG sections/academic and research papers, **e)** text analysis: from reading sources to writing up research/BA paper, **f)** argumentation using sources: using references, quoting, summarizing, paraphrasing and last but not least, **g)** avoiding plagiarism.

1.3. Learning Outcomes

At the end of our Advanced Writing course, we expect our English Studies undergraduates to master vocabulary and grammar for AW, to be able to apply key argumentation techniques (taught and practiced during our sessions), and suitably structure a text (macrostructure), more precisely, an abstract, a literature review and a preliminary BA paper, and implement the “micro linguistic” elements considered vital for academic writing. Finally, our students should show their critical awareness in their writing and reading practice and summarize, paraphrase and use references at professional (writing) level.

2. Methodology and Assessment

The types of activities used are:

- Lectures and seminars: Presentation of the features of AW, for example, argumentation, structure, styles, genre, and theory. Interactive work packs provided working skills such as, critical reading, peer review, discourse analysis, identification of key concepts in reading examples, group discussions and reflections.
- AW exercises: on academic writing vocabulary, connecting devices, abstract, introductions and article analysis and development, summarizing, paraphrasing and quoting sources, etc.
- Abstract: draft, development and final version.
- Literature Review: draft, development and final version.

In addition, in this course, our undergraduates’ work is distributed as follows: a) 50 hours of **autonomous work**, b) 50 hours of **directed work** and finally, c) 25 hours of **supervised work** by their AW lecturer. Finally, the assessment consists of 4 key components with the following percentages assigned: 1) AW Final exam: **40%**, 2)

Writing exercises (continuous throughout the sessions): **20%**, 3) Literature Review (draft and final versions): **30%** and 4) Abstract (draft and final versions): **10%**.

3. Class Progression and Building Blocks

Our teaching methodology is based on increasing the level of difficulty in each session. In other words, we start practicing academic vocabulary, then connectors, linkers and sequencers together with a paragraph structure consolidation to move into more complicated issues, such as *Abstract* and *Literature Review* genre writing or research and academic papers analysis, thus, developing Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) awareness. Below a sample of one of the first exercises undergraduates face:

Fill in the gaps with the vocabulary that is typical of academic papers in English.

1. In _____ of previous research, the present study examines the influence of stress on academic performance of American high school students.
2. There is a tradition in intercultural studies of using compositions and narratives as a means of _____ data on the learners' experience during the visit, in an _____ to analyse and conceptualise their cultural and linguistic experiences.
3. Previous studies _____ on the comparison between L1 and L2 fluency have found that native (L1) and non-native (L2) speakers' productions significantly differ in the temporal domain but are also related to one another to a certain _____.
4. The present chapter covers different topics in the domain of psycholinguistic and it _____ at including different theoretical and methodological perspectives.
5. To recapitulate, three research questions were _____ based on the two main concepts – motivation and language aptitude.
6. Having described the three sets of factors at play in language acquisition and how they impinge on crucial issues in language research, what _____ is a succinct account of research findings on the learning benefits or lack thereof of immersion programmes.
7. This chapter gives a brief _____ of the main findings of the CLIL programmes on language learning and provides suggestions for _____ research on some of the main issues that remain to be resolved.
8. Our focus in this review is to bridge the existing _____ by examining scholarly works on African American literature. Hilary Mac Arnold shows us several women who have _____ greatly to American literature from the colonial period to the present.
9. This proposed volume aims at _____ how women writers represent the concept of masculinity in their literary works.
10. Within the vast range of criticism that has grown up around Austen's novels, only a relatively small _____ of work has paid sustained _____ to the epistolary writings, most of this focusing principally on *Lady Susan*.
11. Of the growing _____ of critical literature on Austen in the 1950s, the major and at the same time most controversial contribution is Marvin Mudrick's *Irony as Defense and Discover*, which _____ perhaps the first systematic assessment of the juvenilia in their own right.

12. Although, in spite of these works, it was not a decade marked by major contribution to the study of Austen's epistolary writings, there is a considerable body of critical work that _____ in part to the early texts and, in particular, to *Lady Susan*, indicating a general _____ in Austen studies towards recognising the need for more comprehensive assessment of the epistolary works.

From: Academic Vocabulary exercise (Zaysteva, 2018)

3.1. Introduction to Abstract Analysis and Writing

Our Advanced Writing students are steadily familiarized with the *Genre Theory* (Swales, 1990) in which the practice the 5 move analysis for suitable abstract writing. In other words, they are able to identify the following 5 rhetorical steps: 1) **background**, 2) **goal/s**, 3) **methods**, 4) **results** and 5) **discussion and conclusion** and can reproduce them by writing an abstract themselves having their future TFG in mind.

Via Reading and assessing examples in class, our students are ready to show their writing skills in a more academic context and taking into account the written genres in the different disciplines. We have included below a task to be completed aiming at raising awareness of text/genre structure and moves both in *Abstracts* and in academic papers *Introductions* and *Literature Reviews*.

a.) An analysis of an abstract

To look at this structure more clearly look at the abstract below and put either: **Background (B)**, **Purpose (P)**, **Method (M)**, **Results (R)** or **Conclusion (C)** next to the corresponding parts of the abstract.

Abstract

STAGES IN AN ABSTRACT FOR AN EXPERIMENTAL STUDY

COMPOSING LETTERS WITH A SIMULATED LISTENING TYPEWRITER

Abstract:

With a listening typewriter, what an author says would be automatically recognised and displayed in front of him or her. However speech recognition is not yet advanced enough to provide people with a reliable listening typewriter. An aim of our experiments was to determine if an imperfect listening typewriter would be useful for composing letters. Participants dictated letters, either in isolated words or in consecutive word speech. They did this with simulations of listening typewriters that recognised either a limited vocabulary or an unlimited vocabulary. Results indicated that some versions, even upon first using them, were at least as good as traditional methods of handwriting and dictating. Isolated word speech with large vocabularies may provide the basis for a useful listening typewriter.

Abstract Analysis, from: Academic Writing Centre, IOE, University London, 2013

The Introduction

The introduction to your dissertation is one of the most important parts of your research. This is because it introduces the reader to your topic and it is an opportunity to grab the reader's (usually your tutor's) attention. Some writers decide to write their introduction first, while others tend to write their introduction at the end. Often it is better to do both: start with writing a draft of your introduction and then edit this as you develop your argument and conclusions. Writing your introduction is a valuable way of:

- Clarifying your thoughts
- Breaking the ice, or the fear of the white page (on paper or laptop).
- Establishing a style
- Providing a structure for your tutorials with your tutor
- It makes up seven to ten percent of your dissertation in a fairly structured way. (Murray 2006)

In order to write a well-structured introduction it is often a good idea to think about the structure and content of the abstract. This is because it is a more distilled and focused summary of your dissertation, and writing this will help you focus on your key aims and ideas.

Task 4: The abstract

What does the abstract contain and what are the rules when writing an abstract? The abstract is a summary, usually of approximately 150-300 words, of what the reader can expect to find in the dissertation. An abstract is concise and does not include references or quotations. Your dissertation abstract is a highly condensed version of a longer piece of writing that highlights the major points covered. It will concisely describe the content and scope of the writing and reviews the contents in an abbreviated form.

There are **two types** of abstracts typically used:

1. Descriptive Abstracts

These tell the reader what information the dissertation contains, and include the purpose, methods, and scope of the report, article, or paper. A descriptive abstract will not provide results, conclusions, or recommendations, and is usually shorter than an informative abstract - usually under 100 words. Its purpose is to merely introduce the subject to reader, who must then read the dissertation to find out your results, conclusions, or recommendations.

2. Informative Abstracts

These communicate specific information about the dissertation, including the purpose, methods, and scope of the report, article, or paper. They provide the dissertation's results, conclusions, and recommendations. They are short but not as short as a descriptive abstract - usually anything from a paragraph to a page or two, depending upon the length of the original work being abstracted. The informative abstract allows the reader to make an informed decision as to whether to read the dissertation or not.

Introduction theory (from: Academic Writing Centre, IOE, University London, 2013)

Abstracts were introduced as they are a key feature of AW and helped consolidate the IMRD structure of AW that was central to the course. Examples were provided in class, then, in groups, students were required to identify the 5 key moves in abstracts. For example, background, identification of the gap, research questions, methodology, results and conclusion. Students were later required to write an abstract based on a series of reports provided and their own literature review for a future TFG.

3.2 Critical Reading Analysis and Writing Practice

As we all know, it is very important to read and write critically, to position ourselves in our texts, and to detect bias in academic and research articles before we attempt to write research oriented genres, such as our BA paper, MA Thesis or PhD. In this vein, argumentation techniques are key to state our standpoint and to back up our main thesis in a piece of academic/research writing. Therefore, the study and practice

of sociopragmatic phenomena as hedges and boosters is important for novice writers in the field. In addition, summarising, paraphrasing and referencing effectively are a must once you enter the academic world both as undergraduate and postgraduate student. You can find below an example of an exercise to develop critical reading before critical writing. Students are asked here to analyse real *Introductions* of BA Papers already published and defended in different disciplines (Hard and Soft Sciences) before engaging in a group discussion in the class.

BA paper *Introduction* section exercise

First

Read them and make individual notes.

NOTICE:

How are they constructed?

(Note I have only included the beginnings and the ends)

How do the writers use the literature to frame their own research?

How strongly do they position themselves?

How do they approach the literature in order to frame their own research?

What disciplinary differences do you notice?

As a small group:

Compare your notes on each sample.

Compare them to each other.

Which of them makes for the most interesting reading?

Which of them is easiest to read /understand?

What organisational strategies have they used to frame their research question?

Be prepared to feed back from your notes to the other groups!

From Academic Writing Centre, IOE, University London, 2012)

To reinforce and assimilate concepts and practice, we also developed exercises to make our students aware of the process of academic research and writing. Thus, in the following exercise (Exercise 2) our undergraduates listened to the explanations of

the lecturer on the process of research writing (of a novice non-native speaker of English who attempts to develop her first Literature Review draft) and, at the end of the whole process, students were asked to assess that LR final version. In other words, they had to detect errors- both at macrostructure and microlinguistic levels- and find ways to improve the academic writing quality. This aids students in seeing the writing process in action and not only the final product.

EXERCISE 2

- ❖ Observe the process of **research writing**. The present student's sample illustrates the steps followed before handing a definite version of a literature review in the field of Psychology.

A STUDENT BEGAN A SHORT LITERATURE REVIEW ON *THE STIGMA OF THE MENTALLY ILL AND PERCEPTIONS OF DANGEROUSNESS*. WORKING THROUGH PSYCHARTICLES SHE FOUND **THREE** LIKELY ARTICLES. WHEN SHE READ THEM ALL, SHE WROTE A **PARAGRAPH DESCRIPTION** OF EACH:

1. Alexander, L.A., & Link, B.G. (2003). The impact of contact on stigmatizing attitudes towards people with mental illness. *Journal of Mental Health*, 12, 271-289.

Alexander and Link (2003) examined the stigma of mental illness, perceptions of dangerousness and social distance in a telephone survey. They found that, as a participant's own life contact with mentally ill individuals increased, participants were both less likely to perceive a target mentally ill individual in a vignette as physically dangerous and less likely to desire social distance from the target. This relationship remained after controlling for demographic and confound variables, such as gender, ethnicity, education, income and political conservatism. They also found that any type of contact – with a friend, a spouse, a family member, a work contact, or a contact in a public place – with mentally ill individuals reduced perceptions of dangerousness of the target in the vignette.

From: Oliver, S. 2013. Writing research workshop, delivered at the Academic Writing Centre, IOE, University of London)

At this stage, our Advanced Writing students are ready to deal with the challenges of drafting and developing their first Literature Review. In this sense, undergraduates are asked to reflect on its purpose, its main common structure, how to deal with sources and use them properly, how to summarize, paraphrase, and use argumentation. Our undergraduates practice drafting, revising, editing and proof reading texts and they learn how to report and use references academically so as not plagiarize. In the following example, we include an exercise where students have to reflect on what a dissertation/thesis/ report is and their personal main challenges when writing and carrying out research.

Example: Reflecting on Academic Writing

Session 2 What is a dissertation?

Task 1

Think about what your idea of a dissertation is and write notes below about what you think a dissertation aims to do. Have you written a dissertation or report before? If so, what was it about and what did you do?

Task 2: Your dissertation/thesis/report

You are attending this course because you are currently thinking about or working on a dissertation, thesis or report. How much research or writing have you done so far on your project? What particular areas do you think you need to work on over the next few weeks?

Task 3:

What are our personal challenges? What do we think we will need most support with? How do we organise our time frame? In order to complete your research, your dissertation should:

- Focus on a specific problem or issue
- Relate the problem or issue to the relevant literature
- Have a reasoned research design
- Provide an analytical and critical approach to the literature and topic

Maintain scholarly standards throughout; and use sound

From: Academic Writing Centre, IOE (University London, 2013)

We also enhanced reflection in our writing sessions by implementing exercises to activate students' previous knowledge, in other words, before starting to write their own LR. We asked students key issues in order to prepare them and make them aware of the importance of the whole LR writing process. For example, questions such as the LR's possible length, the previous research to be included in it and how, and the precise aim of the LR were posed.

Example: Activating student's previous knowledge

EXERCISE 1

- ✓ Check your **literature review knowledge**. Please take into account your current writing situation (maybe preparing for a research article publication or for your thesis/dissertation literature review)

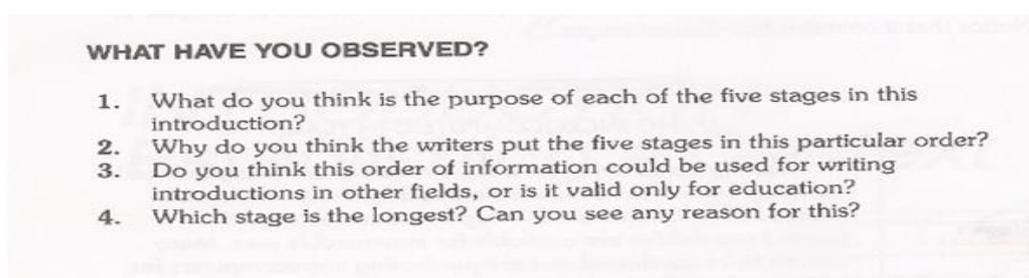
1. The preparation of a literature review is a three-step process: finding the relevant literature, reading, and then writing up the review.
2. Your literature review should be as long as possible to persuade your reader that you have read very widely.
3. You need to include all of the previous research that relates to your topic.
4. You can safely ignore literature that is not directly related to your topic.

5. Your literature review is important because it demonstrates that the findings, theory, or analysis that you will present are a contribution to a cumulative process.
6. Your literature review needs to explain clearly which potential areas for inclusion have not been covered in the review and why they have been omitted.
7. Your literature review should discuss problems and/or controversies within your field.
8. Your literature review should be presented in chronological order.
9. Your literature review can help you discover conceptual traditions and frameworks used to examine problems.
10. Your literature review should focus on very recent publications because they are likely the most relevant.
11. Your literature review should help you reveal gaps in the existing body of research.
12. In your literature review you should critically evaluate each piece of work included.

From: Swales and Feak (2000), *English in Today's Research World: A Writing Guide*

Students were provided with strategies to aid their writing process. For example, we presented the CARS (Create A Research Space) model created by Swales (1990) to exemplify the main moves present in a LR. They saw models and samples and were asked to reproduce 1) an exploration of the territory, (review of the field), 2) the identification of the gap, justification and importance of the research, and 3) presentation of how the current work fills the gap.

Example: preliminary Introduction structure



WHAT HAVE YOU OBSERVED?

1. What do you think is the purpose of each of the five stages in this introduction?
2. Why do you think the writers put the five stages in this particular order?
3. Do you think this order of information could be used for writing introductions in other fields, or is it valid only for education?
4. Which stage is the longest? Can you see any reason for this?

Ordering your Information

The preceding example is typical of introductions to experimental research reports in many different fields in terms of (1) the *kinds* of information it provides to the reader and (2) the *order* in which the information is sequenced. Figure 2.2 illustrates this sequence.

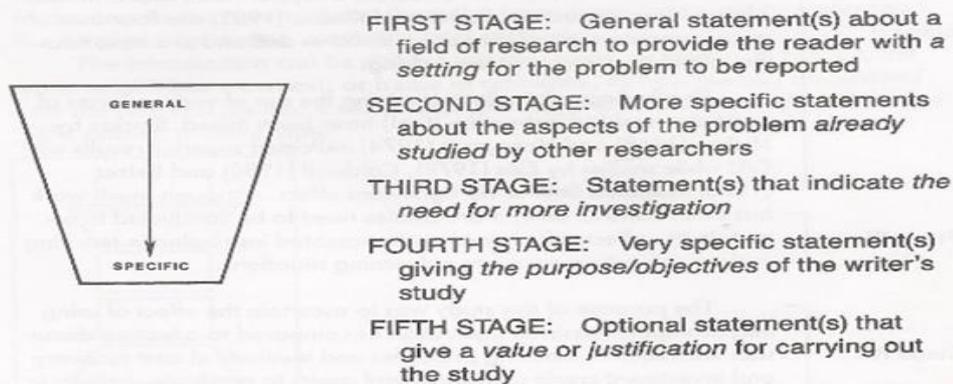


FIGURE 2.2 The five stages of the introduction.

22 ESTABLISHING A CONTEXT

From: Academic Writing Centre, IOE (University London, 2012)

Steadily, our undergraduates were “walked through” the process of writing a LR. In fact, it was presented as a series of small assignments or tasks done progressively throughout the semester. We began with brainstorming topics, narrowing it down to an appropriate topic that could be tackled in their TFG future writing. They were, then, asked to carry out such tasks as, to write an introductory paragraph, find three sources, summarize and link the sources in a paragraph, evaluate how their sources relate to their thesis statement (main thesis, argument), write a concluding paragraph and provide the selected references.

Students were also asked to write a draft providing the outline and this was afterwards peer reviewed in a special session. Each lecturer in the Advanced Writing course also provided individual feedback and students then had to build on their drafts by adding more sources, strengthening their arguments, double checking their stance and improving their academic English (register of the language) if necessary. One of the strengths of conducting peer reviews is that undergraduates can aid in raising their own and other student’s awareness regarding what is expected of them, in other words, they then begin to learn to be critical of their own work. See an example of a peer review template used in our sessions of Advanced Writing in the following page.

Example: Peer review template (Oliver & Ament, 2019)

Peer Review form

Name & Surname/s:

Read your classmate's text and answer the following questions:

(Remember to justify your answers and provide constructive feedback/criticism for your peers. How can they improve, what are the strong points, what is missing? What is unclear? What is unnecessary?)

1. Topic Definition

- a. Is the topic well defined? Is the title clear?
- b. What discipline and sub discipline does the topic belong to? (eg. Literature--- Contemporary poetry; Linguistics--- analysis of L2 errors).
- c. Is a clear theoretical background provided? Can you clearly understand the approach taken in the paper?

2. Identifying and filling the gap/question/purpose of the paper (Remember to justify your answers and provide constructive feedback/criticism for your peers)

- a. Is there a clear question/purpose/gap that the author is attempting to fill?
- b. What is original about the author's approach? How can the author contribute to the field of his or her selected topic?
- c. Why is the study/analysis/comparison/review etc. important? (has this been made very clear?)

3. Summary of sources

- a. Has the author used external sources? Are they well summarized and placed in the text?
- b. Are they well referenced?(reference style, plagiarism etc.)
- c. Is it clear how the cited sources relate to the paper/topic? Any unnecessary sources? or the opposite, do you find that it lacks external sources to build the author's argument?

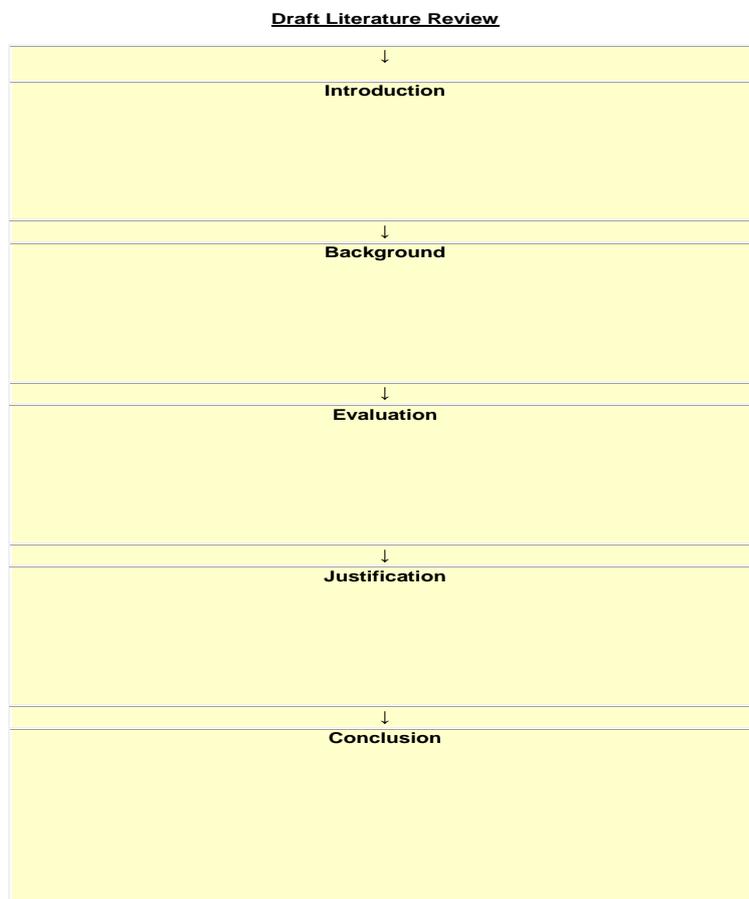
4. Comment here on language, Grammar, Vocabulary and appropriate Academic style. (linkers/hedgers/boosters/register/etc. strong and weak points)

5. Comment here on each section of the paper (strong and weak points, clarity, completeness, flow etc.)

- a. Introduction
- b. Main body (theoretical background)
- c. Gap / contribution
- d. Evaluation/comparison/analysis/justification
- e. Conclusions

After carrying out the preliminary LR draft, selecting 3 references (sources), writing an introduction, posing a possible gap in the existing literature (potential gap), summarizing those sources and providing the reader with a sound concluding paragraph (indicating the possible contribution of the piece of research), our students were then, asked to implement more sources and “polish” their previous version with their peers’ feedback and their lecturer’s comments and suggestions. Below a template of a more complete LR outline after peer reviewing and first draft correction.

Example: Literature Review Outline Template



From: Academic Writing Centre, IOE (University London, 2013)

For many students integrating their sources into the LR and maintaining their voice is a new skill that presents many challenges. We tried to address this by including an exercise proposed by Swales and Feak (2000) on organizational ‘architecture’ (see below). This exercise requires students to group their sources to plan a coherent LR. This exercise also helps students become aware of the importance of ordering information, summarizing sources and gives them hands on practice with the writing process and decision-making process required to write an effective academic LR.

Example: Using sources/ drawing a scheme: Discussing organizational “architecture”

EXERCISE 3

- Read the following 9 abstracts (extracted from Swales and Feak (2000) *English in Today’s Research World. A Writing Guide*) and **draw a scheme** for organizing them as if you had to plan and write a literature review of your own. Please keep in mind that there is no right way to order or group the abstracts and, thus, you have to be prepared to explain the thinking processes behind your choices while discussing organizational “architecture” in this workshop.

Two of the nine examples of the abstracts provided to be grouped in this task:

1. Van Hoek, J. 1996. Information in manufacturing systems and the needs of graduating engineer. *European Journal of Professional Education* 17:67-77.

Few opportunities for developing communication skills exist in the crowded curricula of most bachelor of science engineering courses in Western Europe. It is thus important that those few available are spent on fundamental aspects of the most relevant areas. The course developed at the University of Amsterdam is built around case studies of actual manufacturing problems. Students are required to form engineer-manager groups as task forces to solve problems as they arise. In this way they become socialized into the engineering community. Evidence is presented from student evaluations as to the success of this approach.

2. Scott, J. 1995. The logical structure of technical reports: software support. *Journal of Technical Documentation* 11:273-82.

The “expression” problem in writing engineering technical reports is secondary to the “comprehension” problem—that is, the ability to perceive relevance, organize material into sections, and then organize sections into a logical order. This paper begins by considering the question of efficiency and the contributions that “logical sections in logical order” can make to the effectiveness of reports. It then presents an algorithmic IBM-compatible software program which encourages the kind of analysis and organization underlying effective report writing.

As previously mentioned, using sources correctly and to one’s benefit is a difficult task for novice writers to acquire and it is something we were continuously trying to introduce and support in our subject. It is an essential part of argumentation and what most AW is built on in any field. This is why we tried to introduce the

different functions of using sources. The example below is an activity used for this purpose: 1.knowing how to report, 2.critique, 3.generalize and 4.exploit sources in AW.

Example: Introducing sources/ Building your own argument

These sentences have been organised around four functions of literature reviewing: 1.REPORTING; 2.CRITIQUING; 3.GENERALISING; 4.EXPLOITING. Ultimately all of these functions come down to the last one: EXPLOITING. As one professor advised her students: “Use the literature. Don’t let the literature use you”

1. REPORTING: Reporting Verbs: Word choice

- a) It has been argued that examination scores are not a good indicator of students’ abilities e.g. Coles (2004)
- b) In another article C considers that examinations do not explicitly indicate high levels of ability.

2. CRITIQUING: Challenging the claim

- a) She doesn’t seem to take into consideration, however, that there are fundamental differences in the conditions of candidates from school to school.
- b) As L. Coles points out, however, it seems to be necessary to look at ...

3. GENERALISING: Making generalisations

- a) It has been argued by Coles (2004) that the situation of taking examinations is different among different areas of the curriculum.
- b) It is widely used in the practice of ESP EAP (Swales & Feak 1994-2000)

4. EXPLOITING: Establishing and using the relationships between the parts of the original argument to your own benefit (supporting your main arguments/theses)

- a) In this perspective, it could be argued that the examination scores are not sufficient to conclude that teaching is poor in some schools.
- b) On the one hand, a high rate of PMs in learner’s interlanguage could be attributed to a high presence of these in the instructional input, since the previous studies have pointed out the effects of instruction on PM use in a multilingual setting (Martín-Laguna & Alcón Soler, 2018; Neary-Sunquist, 2014).

In order to practice summarizing, paraphrasing and referencing skills, we created an interactive work pack that we used in several seminars. Learning to effectively paraphrase and summarize are essential skills for any academic writer and yet, seems to be an ability that develops slowly, particularly, in a second language. Thus, hands on practice was provided via the pack which contained activities, such as rewording phrases, working with synonyms, summarizing various texts into 70 and after 30 words, for example. We asked our students to identify the main point of the selected texts and excerpts and they were asked to combine sources into one paragraph by paraphrasing and positioning the sources either together or in opposition. In addition, they were also asked to identify plagiarism and the importance of following Departmental style guides and being aware of the varied international academic writing (referencing, citing) practices, such as APA, MLA Vancouver or Harvard was stressed. The following tasks illustrate the type of activities carried out in our sessions devoted to summarizing, quoting, referencing and avoiding plagiarism:

Example: Summarizing, quoting and referencing

ACTIVITIES TYPOLOGY:

- *Exercise asking students to reword phrases*
- *Summarize texts into 30 words*
- *Combine three sources into one paragraph*
- *Direct quotes vs. Paraphrasing*
- *How to identify plagiarism*
- *Discussion of style guides*

Writing pack activities Advanced Writing course (Oliver & Ament, 2019)

Example: Academic writing, learning to paraphrase

SOURCE: Academic Writing: Handbook for International Students

1. Paraphrasing

Paraphrasing involves changing a text so that it is quite different from the source, while retaining the meaning. This skill is important in several areas of academic work, but this unit focuses on using paraphrasing in note-making and summary writing. Effective paraphrasing is vital in academic writing to avoid the risk of plagiarism.

1. Although paraphrasing techniques are used in summary writing, paraphrasing does not aim to shorten the length of a text, merely to restate it.

For example:

"Evidence of a lost civilisation has been found off the coast of China" could be paraphrased as:

"Remains of an ancient society have been discovered in the sea near China"

2. A good paraphrase is significantly different from the wording of the original, without altering the meaning at all.

Read the text below and then decide which is the better paraphrase, (a) or (b).

Ancient Egypt collapsed in about 2180 BC. Studies conducted of the mud from the River Nile showed that at this time the mountainous regions which feed the Nile suffered from a prolonged drought. This would have had a devastating effect on the ability of Egyptian society to feed itself.

a) The sudden ending of Egyptian civilisation over 4,000 years ago was probably caused by changes in the weather in the region to the south. Without the regular river flooding there would not have been enough food.

b) Research into deposits of the Egyptian Nile indicate that a long dry period in the mountains at the river's source may have led to a lack of water for irrigation around 2180 BC, which was when the collapse of Egyptian society began.

3. Techniques

a) Changing vocabulary:

studies > research society > civilization mud > deposits

NB Not all words and phrases can be paraphrased. For example, *economics*, *socialism* or *global warming* have no effective synonyms.

b) Changing word class:

Egypt (n.) > Egyptian (adj.) mountainous regions (adj. + n.) > in the mountains (n.)

c) Changing word order:

Ancient Egypt collapsed > the collapse of Egyptian society began

4. Final Exams: Synthesis of Skills Learned

We designed Advanced Writing exam to measure the ability of students to identify the key features of AW discussed in class. It was competency based and very practical. We aimed to touch on all skills covered in the course and, thus, the exam consisted of identifying different sections, moves, micro and macro language features of an academic article in the field of study related to the course (both Literature and Linguistics). The exam was piloted beforehand in the class, giving the students practice of the skills needed to complete the exam (with skimming and scanning techniques). See below the writing final exam academic year 2019-2020 and 2 article samples:

UNIVERSITAT AUTÒNOMA DE BARCELONA CURS 2019-2020

ADVANCED WRITING FINAL EXAM

STUDENT'S NAME & SURNAME:

Read the academic paper and answer the following questions: (**Remember to justify your answers**)

1. **Topic Definition**
 - a. What is the discipline and sub discipline of this academic journal article?
 - b. Identify what the topic of the article is and what elements or concepts are discussed.
 - c. State what theoretical approach is adopted by the researcher and where.

2. **Identifying the filling the gap/question/purpose of the paper.**
 - a. What is the **aim** or **purpose** of the paper? How and where is it stated?
 - b. Where and how does the author identify the **gap**?
 - c. What **justification** does the author provide for carrying out the study?

3. **Make a brief summary of TWO of the sections of the paper (20-30 words each)**
 - a. Introduction (aim/gap)
 - b. Literature review (theoretical background)
 - c. Methodology
 - d. Results
 - e. Conclusions and/or Discussion

4. **Identifying move structure**
 - a. Provide a scheme of the article identifying the moves discussed in class. (Swales, 1990)
 - b. Find examples of the following **functions**: reporting / critiquing / generalising / exploiting (6 examples in total)

5. **Hedges, boosters & connectors :**
 - a. Provide examples of **hedges** and **boosters** in the paper and state their purpose. (6 examples in total)
 - b. Provide examples of **connectors** in the paper and state their purpose. (6 examples in total)

6. **Paragraph and source analysis :**
 - a. Analyse one paragraph containing a source. Critique it, explain how it is either well or poorly written.
 - b. What is the purpose of the source and what is the stance of the author towards the source? Explain.
 - c. What is the aim of the paragraph?
 - d. How does the author connect this paragraph with the rest of the paper?

7. **References :**
 - a. Find an example of paraphrasing in the paper.
 - b. Find an example of in-text quotation in the paper.

Advanced Writing Final Exam: A competence-based test (Ament & Oliver, 2019)

Final exam: Analysing a journal paper

Sample 1: International Journal of Language Studies 14, 1 (2020)

International Journal of Language Studies
Volume 14, Number 1, January 2020, pp. 141-154

Error gravity analysis of IELTS students' academic writing task 2

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This study aimed to explore language areas where students need support, practice, and feedback in their IELTS academic Task 2 writing. To fulfill the purpose of the study, a convenient sample of 200 IELTS candidates ($N=200$) at Amir Kabir University of Technology were invited to write an IELTS academic task 2 essay. Two certified IELTS examiners rated the essays based on the following criteria: Task Achievement (TA), Cohesion and Coherence (CC), Lexical Resource (LR), and Grammar Range and Accuracy (GRA). The results revealed that students need more training, practice, and feedback on Task Achievement in comparison with the other three writing task rubrics. Following TA stood CC, LR, and GRA. This study suggests that writing instructors in general, and IELTS teachers in specific, introduce the writing assessment rubrics (IELTS writing band descriptor for IELTS candidates) to students fully and analyze some sample writings in their classrooms for the students to familiarize them with IELTS examiners' expectations. It was concluded that teachers should spend more quality time on providing students with task achievement feedback as it tops the error gravity list.

Keywords: Error Gravity; ESL and EFL Writing; Feedback; IELTS Academic Task 2; Writing

1. Introduction

University students and academics all around the world are required to know academic writing conventions in English as they need to publish essays or articles in their field of expertise, to perceive diverse aspects of their disciplines, to establish their careers, or to successfully develop academically (Hyland, 2011). Therefore, writing has received privileged status in recent years, and academic contexts require an acceptable level of writing ability.

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Exploring EFL Learners' Self-Efficacy in Academic Writing Based on Process-Genre Approach

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Abstract

This study explores the change of EFL learners' level of self-efficacy in process-genre academic writing instruction. The teaching experiment was conducted for 14 weeks. A total of 59 graduate students participated in the experiment. Before the experiment, the results showed that the general level of EFL graduates' self-efficacy in academic writing was relatively low. After 14 weeks of academic writing instruction conducted by the process-genre approach, participants' self-efficacy improved significantly. In the interview, participants also reported an increasing level of confidence in academic writing. Based on the findings, implications of academic writing instruction to improve students' self-efficacy are discussed in the paper.

Keywords: self-efficacy, process-genre approach, EFL learners, academic writing

1. Introduction

English is a universal language in today's scientific world, and it plays a significant role in the world's best academic publications. With "Double-First Class" initiative which aims to establish world first class universities and disciplines in China and strive for making China an international higher education power, there is an urgent need for Chinese EFL learners to improve their academic English competence in academic exchanges. For graduate students, they are expected to keep up with the cutting edge of the latest development in their discipline from international journals. A number of them are required to participate in research work including some international projects, to attend international academic conferences, and to make oral presentations and publish journal articles in English. This is a big challenge for EFL learners. Actually, for EFL learners, their English writing activities are greatly restricted by in-class experience. Out of the classroom, they seldom have the environment to use the target language to communicate. Under this condition, the function of foreign language writing is no more than activities of practicing grammar and vocabulary (Sasaki & Hirose, 1996). Thus, foreign language learners are more likely to be concerned with grammatical aspects than pragmatic aspects in writing (Alco'n, 2005; Bardovi-Harlig & Dörnyei, 1998; Koike & Pearson, 2005; Takahashi, 2001, 2005). In other words, writing is regarded as a grammatical tool but not a primary medium to satisfy communicative needs, so EFL learners usually have difficulties developing their awareness of the important relationship between text features and the communicative purpose in different contexts. They are largely confined to the micro-structure of writings, such as words and sentences, but fail to pay due attention to the macro-structure of the overall discourse (Rosemary, 2017). Academic English writing is quite different from general English writing in terms of its purpose, potential readers, text structures and language styles. However, the explicit instruction about how to construct academic writing and choose appropriately from language varieties is insufficient and EAP research is just beginning in China. These make many graduates feel lack of support and confidence in writing academic papers in English and their academic writing proficiency is low.

In addressing this issue, in the past decades, considerable scholars discussed the values of genre-based approach in writing instruction (Belcher, 1994, 2004; Byrnes, 2009; Cheng, 2006, 2007, 2008a, 2008b; Flowerdew, 2002; Gentil, 2005; Hyland, 2007; Swales, 1990; Tardy, 2009). From the systemic functional perspective, genre-based pedagogy emphasizes the interconnection between the form of language and its function in social context (Hyland, 2007). That is, language is used for communicating with others for specific social purposes. Genre-based L2 writing instruction provides explicit and supportive instruction to learners to assist them in understanding the features of discourse (Hyland, 2007). It is widely used in the practice of ESP and EAP (Swales

5. Students' Voices on Their Own Learning

Since the course took a very practical approach we wanted to get students' feedback on our Academic Writing subject. What we found out was that they were, in general, very positive and had found the course useful. It is also true, however, that some students failed to see the importance of a course such as this (having in mind that they have to develop, write and orally defend a TFG the following academic year. See below some of the positive comments students made about the course:

- ✓ 'I found the course **practical and useful**'
- ✓ 'I found it helpful and useful **to be able to identify the structure and contents of a Literature Review** this will definitely help me in my future'
- ✓ 'Learning **academic structure and style** has been the most interesting and useful for me'
- ✓ 'It is now **easy for me to read and understand an academic article** now that I understand the structure'
- ✓ '**I learned to organise my writing** and to think about **how to structure it**'
- ✓ 'I learned **how to argue my own idea and to be critical of others**'

6. Reflections and Conclusions

Some reflections we have had on completing the course are that we saw a clear benefit to the use of peer review practice in the classroom. It is also necessary to recognize that students need to be taught to peer review and class time needs to be dedicated to them learning the skills of peer review and its potential benefits in their process of writing and the quality of their final production (either an abstract, a LR or a future TFG). But, that said, once they begin the benefits are enormous, they steadily become aware of it, they become critical of their own writing and other's, they learn how to improve their own work, they learn how to communicate ideas and help

others, and they improve their own writing abilities within the academic and research oriented practices.

Another important feature of this Advanced Writing course is that the lecturer provided a lot of individual feedback and this is very necessary scaffolding for novice writers. In fact, it would have been ideal to have smaller class sizes (no more than 50 and even up to 60 students per group) for writing training so that the lecturers could have provided more editing and correction of students' work. Nevertheless, students still were required to write in every class and outside the classroom, which helped to improve their skills gradually.

As previously explained, in order to achieve TFG quality writing we reinforced the practical side of AW by introducing specific tools throughout this 6ECTS course. In other words, undergraduates participated in peer review tutorials, critical reading sessions, follow-up writing exercises, in class intensive practice, group discussion and they received constant feedback from their lecturers. By focusing on the writing process, students were able to improve their written production over time. Therefore, our teaching methodology seems to suit our students' needs with effective writing skills to face the TFG challenge with more confidence in the following academic year.

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February 2018

ABSTRACT: Of all forms of writing, poetry is often perceived by students as the least accessible and as the genre that, especially, taxes their interpretative skills. Prosody—the phonetic characteristics of this form—is arguably the most immediate and disconcerting obstacle to students’ fuller appreciation of poetry. Whilst rhyme is generally not difficult to perceive and appreciate, the patterns of stress that are the essential building blocks of poetry (a recognition and understanding of which are indispensable to comprehensive critical appreciation) usually prove to be particularly challenging.

I assess these issues and their consequences more fully and present what I hope is an engaging, constructive and essentially ludic means to make our students, whose first language is in most cases—in our specific context—Catalan or Spanish, more fully aware of how stress and rhythm work in English poetry, fostering their critical skills and providing further tools for discussing and describing literary effect..

KEYWORDS: poetry, stress, rhythm, limericks

In his “Essay on Dante” (1929), T. S. Eliot remarked that “genuine poetry can communicate before it is understood”. From such an intensely cerebral writer—from whom an emphasis on, say, literary technique or erudite intertextuality would not remotely surprise us—this is a rather unexpected observation. It appears to suggest that poetry contains something that is, essentially, pre-linguistic and that this ‘something’ has a very considerable importance. If poetry can communicate before such communication is consolidated through our comprehension of its message, what does this first-phase connection with its audience consist of? Self-evidently, this cannot be the words that create meaning, since these require deciphering to be accorded sense; it must be something prior to the lexical. I suppose, therefore, that it must be the specific arrangements of sound that poetry constructs, and that we perceive and—in Eliot’s understanding of all this—respond to in an intuitive way, even before the necessary process of comprehending the meaning of the poem has begun. In other words, he is surely referring to rhyme and rhythm.

My focus here is on the more complex of these two concepts, rhythm, which I understand as the way that poetry organises sound patterns into regular beats that can affect readers and listeners in a direct and profoundly instinctive manner, much as the beat of a song can enter our heads and cause us to respond before any fuller understanding of that song has registered with us.

It is never an easy task to try and define distinct literary genres. Rather frustratingly, the more we try to do so, the less we seem to be able to capture the essence of something that—when not reflecting overly on these issues—otherwise appears perfectly clear. This happens, for instance, when we enquire into the difference between poetry and prose. Clearly, there are characteristics of both that might be forwarded as being differentiating. For instance, poetry often makes use of rhyme (though not always); it is sometimes arranged into stanzas (though again, not always). Prose is frequently far more extensive than poetry—think of a novel compared to a sonnet—and tends to make far less use of intensely distilled description (but both of these ideas admit of countless exceptions). Poetry seems, we might think, to specialise in defamiliarising objects or emotions, but then again, we could hardly claim that prose never enters such a terrain.

Perhaps the single most significant distinction between the two modes of writing, however, is the insistent, regular and highly constructed use of rhythm in poetry, as opposed to a far less detectable regularity of rhythm in prose. Which is not at all to deny that prose rhythms exist, nor to suggest that their effectiveness is minor (even a brief review of the Johnsonian cadences present in much late eighteenth-century prose writing, to give only one example, would show this to be untrue). But rhythm forms such a fundamental part of poetic expression that it can usefully serve as the defining characteristic of this genre, more so even than the formal arrangement of stanzas or the even the obviously poetic feature of rhyme. In light of this, an enquiry into the many ways that poets use rhythm will reveal a complex network of literary devices that reinforce semantic content and cause us, perhaps even unconsciously as Eliot suggests, to react to the totality of the poem (rhythm, sound and meaning) in a manner that other genres simply cannot replicate.

Showing students how this aspect of poetry works is not unlike revealing the engine that lies within an aesthetically pleasing and well-functioning surface of a machine that, without such reference to its engine, gives us little idea of how it actually works. Focussing on prosody, the patterns of rhythm used in poetry, allows us to gain a far fuller picture of how a poem creates its deepest effects. Engaging with distinct forms of rhythm provides readers of poetry (including students, of course!) with an appreciation of an entire ambit of literary devices through which to approach a form of writing that can often appear abstract and difficult to respond to. And it does so in ways that focus on technique and that are objectively demonstrable. Yet it is frequently this very aspect of discussing poetry that is least made use of in the literature class. This may respond to a perfectly comprehensible reticence to over-burden students with an intricate array of new terminology (for example, iambic trochees; tetramic pentameters; spondees, anapests and dactyls, none of which is particularly user-friendly, though whether such terminology is essential is an open question), or to the equally comprehensible perception that our own courses in which poetry is a major element simply do not allow for the necessary time that would be required to help students gain a decent working knowledge of prosody. It may also be the case that prosody is seen as a dense and demotivating subject that kills off students' attempts at interpretation by insisting on mechanical issues at the expense of subjective response. And finally, very significantly for students who—in their majority—are speakers of Catalan and Spanish (syllable-timed languages), the difficulty of identifying the ways in which English (a stress-timed language) distributes its phonetic weighting can lead to a sense of confusion and dismay.

Students can be taught to appreciate poetry in many distinct ways; as teachers, we can of course entirely forego any formal use of the concepts and terminology of prosody. We can focus instead on a multitude of other poetic devices that are more easily identified and comprehended and, in doing so, provide our students with perfectly effective means of critically reading the genre. But if we accept that an essential element of poetry is its sound, that it exists not simply to be read but also to be spoken and listened to, then we have to accept the need to connect with poetic rhythm. And, for poetry written in English, this means discussing the way that phonic

stress in English is so different from Romance languages. If students are to reach a useful understanding of how poetry uses rhythm, they need to be helped in identifying how English rhythm works and in what ways it is different from their own Romance-based expectations.

The notion of stress-timed and syllable-timed languages is not universally agreed on and still generates some controversy. These concepts pertain to the ambit of isochrony (the postulated rhythmic division—by language—of time into equal portions. In syllable-timed languages (such as Spanish or, to a slightly lesser extent, Catalan), the duration of every syllable is approximately equal. In contrast, in stress-timed languages, the interval between two stressed syllables is approximately equal. In other words, the phonic unit of reference for Romance languages is the syllable; in contrast, for English, the phonic unit of reference is main stress. Naturally, this brief overview is a vast over-simplification; but it does point to the source of our students' difficulties with English poetic rhythm: they are attuned to the syllable; the poets whose work they are reading were attuned to main stress.

For a Romance-language reader, the following two utterances are obviously distinct: the first contains three syllables; the second, five:

1. Cóme fór téa?
2. Cóming fór sóme téa?

Rhythmically speaking, for the Romance reader, the second utterance would take longer than the first. An English reader would also see that there is a difference here in number of syllables, of course, but both utterances would take the same time to pronounce, since they both contain 2 main stresses (rhythmically speaking, the number of syllables is essentially secondary):

1. Cóme for téa?
2. Cóming for some téa?

Clearly, this is difficult for Romance-language students to perceive (and produce). In English poetry, however, this phenomenon is the basic building block of poetic rhythm. Poets use it expressly, and to great effect.

For example, one of the ‘standard’ rhythms of what we might call classical English poetry is the so-called iambic pentameter. The pentameter is a poetic line of five stressed elements; the iamb is a poetic unit (conventionally called a ‘foot’) containing two elements, one unstressed, the other stressed. So, an iambic pentameter looks like this:

[That **time**] [of **year**] [thou **mayst**] [in **me**] [**behold**] ([xxx] = foot; **xxx** = stress)
When yellow leaves, or none, or few do hang
Upon those boughs which shake against the cold,
Bare ruined choirs where late the sweet birds sang.

(Shakespeare, Sonnet 73 ll.1-4)

Evidently, many other forms are possible and even common (the four-stressed tetrameter; the three-stressed trimeter, which are used in alternate lines in much early Romantic poetry, for example), but it is the pentameter, and most especially the iambic pentameter, that is the heartbeat of much canonical English poetry. It is also a line whose rhythm is very natural to the patterns of spoken English and this is of great help in conveying its sense of “rightness” in poetry. The iambic pentameter runs through English verse (“And smale fowles maken melodye/That slepen al the night with open ye”; “Was this the face that launch’d a thousand ships?”; “To be, or not to be, that is the question”; “Of man’s first disobedience, and the fruit/Of that forbidden tree whose mortal tast”; “My name is Ozymandias, King of Kings/Look on my works, ye mighty, and despair!”; “But someone still was yelling out and stumbling/And flound’ring like a man in fire or lime”; “He was my North, my South, my East and West”...)³ It is, in a very real literary sense, the ‘norm’ through which countless poets have expressed their ideas.

The gently elegiac tone of Sonnet 73 that describes the coming of old age is, in very great measure, made more effective by the liquid quality of the pentameter lines.

However, variation from this norm can be expressed, subliminally but clearly, by altering this rhythmic expectation. In this sense, a knowledge of how poetic rhythm

³ Respectively, from Chaucer’s “Prologue to the Canterbury Tales”; Marlowe’s *Doctor Faustus*; Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*; Milton’s “Paradise Lost”; Shelley’s “Ozymandias”; Owen’s “Dulce et Decorum Est”; Auden’s “Funeral Blues”.

connects with and affects the content of the lines it sustains is of enormous help in understanding both the choice and the consequence of a move away from the iambic pentameter. Shakespeare's *Macbeth* has one of the most universally recognised openings in English literature, yet the exquisite suitability of its rhythmic structure is rather less understood. The opening runs like this:

(First witch):

"**When** shall **we** three **meet** a **gain** ([xxx] = foot; **xxx** = stress)
In thunder, lightning, or in rain?"

(Second witch):

"When the hurlyburly's done
When the battle's lost and won".

And it moves towards its conclusion, after the third witch has also had her say, in the following manner:

"**Fair** is **foul**, and **foul** is **fair**"

What is key to recognise here is that Shakespeare quite literally inverts the 'normality' expressed by the iambic pentameter and replaces it with a shorter, more aggressive punch conveyed through a poetic line called the trochaic tetrameter (a trochee is a foot in which the first of its two elements—in contrast to the iamb—is stressed). Read against the smooth elegance of an iambic line, the trochaic line is pugnacious and insistent; it is an entire beat shorter, and, combined with its first-element stress, it pushes the line along at a pace that is far faster and far sharper than the more contemplative iambic pentameter. But more than this, it is not a natural rhythm to spoken English; it is stylistically marked, meaningfully contrived, poetically forced. And so the text communicates to us through a rhythmic beat which we might, in this case, call perverse, that the universe of this particular scene is unnatural, that the expected has been replaced with the unexpected, and that the world has been turned inside out (the once fair is now deemed foul, the once foul is now deemed fair).

This is one small example of the ways in which an understanding of rhythm provides the ability to read far more deeply into the range of meanings that poems (or verse lines) contain. Certainly, the kind of comment that has just been made about

Macbeth can equally be made without recourse to any prosodic terminology; but it absolutely cannot be made without a knowledge of where exactly the stresses fall within the lines themselves.

The question, then, is how to help students whose language is syllable timed to identify stress distribution in a poetic line. If students become, first, familiar with stress-timed lines and, second, confident in detecting both where the stresses fall and, if applicable, why a poet might choose a particular rhythmic structure, they will then be significantly empowered in their own critical readings.

Turning students' attention away from the sublime heights of the canonical poets to the doggerel that often characterises the limerick—a humorous five-line poem with a strict rhyme and rhythm scheme—may seem to be a questionable pedagogical move, but it is precisely a focus on this form that, in my view, can be of enormous practical assistance to speakers of a syllable-timed language when trying to gain a working familiarity with English poetic rhythm. This is particularly the case if we ask such students to write their own limericks, an activity that focusses attention far more directly on rhythm than is the case if the exercise is merely that of reading. The essentially demotic nature of the limerick means that demands on literary creativity are not excessive (as they might sometimes be if we ask students to produce a well-polished sonnet), and its humorousness is a strong element of motivation. But, most especially, the highly rigid structure makes this an easy model to reproduce; it allows—in its most common form—almost no flexibility. Critically, unlike the haiku (another short type of poem often used in simple creative-writing exercises), the rhythmic structure of the limerick is entirely stress-determined. If you know how to distribute the stresses within a line, your limerick will basically work; if you don't, it just won't.

In spite of what is often their rather ingenious content, structurally speaking limericks are very simple poems. The following typically anonymous example is an example:

There was a young lady named Bright
Who travelled much faster than light.
She set out one day
In a relative way
And returned the previous night.

Whilst in fact there are a number of variations possible in the limerick form, the most popular type of the poem is that of the above verse. It is typical to begin such poems establishing the existence of a character (or entity); to then add a comment on a defining element of that character; this is then followed by a brief description of an incident and concludes humorously, frequently involving a pun. Far more important for our current purposes, however, are the formal properties of the limerick, as the following indicates:

There **was** a young **lady** named **Bright** (3 stresses) (a)
Who **travelled** much **faster** than **light**. (3 stresses) (a)
She **set** out one **day** (2 stresses) (b)
In a **relative way** (2 stresses) (b)
And **returned** the **previous night**. 3 stresses) (a)

It is worth observing that, in keeping with stress-timed rhythms, the number of syllables per line (8, 8, 5, 6, 8) is not of great importance. For this typical limerick model to work, the rhythm requires two initial lines of three main stresses (each line-end rhyming identically), a third and fourth lines each of two main stresses, with each line-end rhyming identically, and a final line of three main stresses rhyming identically with lines one and two.

The advantage of such a basic formal model is that it is easy to replicate (quite independently of the quality of the overall poem and the success of its closing note of humour). At the same time, that replication requires the ability to produce lines that work—as regards sound patterns—not on the basis of syllabic structure but of stress distribution. In other words, it obliges the writer to be able to count in stress time. This in turn requires the writer to have carefully selected their words in order to precisely and correctly collocate the stresses in these lines and is therefore a significant step towards understanding the basic acoustic ‘motor’ of English poetic rhythm. It provides students with a simple yet highly practical key to begin assessing the rhythm of the poetry that they read in a way that engages with the same phonetic system as that used by the original poet and helps avoid the interference of misreading English poetry from a syllable-timed perspective. That is, by learning the basics of English stress through the limerick, students are then in a far better position to approach the ways in

which stress is put to use in the more literary forms of poetry studied throughout the degree.

The eventual consequences for students of gaining a closer acquaintance with English poetic rhythm is to attain a far more sensitive and technically informed understanding how poets actually construct their works, beat by beat, line by line; to attain a much clearer insight into what is distinctive about poetry, how it produces its effects through sound, and—more generally—how the modification of stress can impact dramatically on meaning.

I began with a reference to T. S. Eliot, so it is apt to bring him in again on closing this brief discussion. One of the greatest English poets, W. H. Auden, was not above trying his hand out at limericks; and he wrote this particular one about the perennial confusion between the Eliots, George and Thomas Stearns:

T. S. Eliot is quite at a loss
When people come bustling across
At literary teas
Crying. "What, if you please,
Did you mean by *The Mill on the Floss*?"

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NOELIA SÁNCHEZ CAMPOS. TEACHING ACADEMIC WRITING: THE LIGHTS AND SHADOWS OF ACADEMIA

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ABSTRACT: The world of academia is highly competitive and demanding. One must enter it fully aware of what lies ahead. Numerous hours and sacrifices will most certainly ensue. Yet, not everything is completely dark. The light is to be found within one's own passion. As with any profession, academia requires a vocation, a willingness to overcome any obstacle and, above all, a clear determination to pursue what you truly wish to achieve. This paper examines my experience teaching the module Advanced Academic Abilities at MA level. This course is meant to ensure students improve the set of skills that will facilitate the completion of their TFM and, in some cases, set the ground on which to start planning their future PhD thesis. I will discuss the kind of tasks I provide in this module and, crucially, students' responses to the different activities so as to offer possible approaches to teach academic writing. This will, hopefully, contribute to shedding some light on the perks and shadows of academia that our MA students will surely discover soon enough.

KEYWORDS: academic writing, student skills, activities, feedback, English

When we think about academia the first thing that comes to our mind is the tremendous amount of work that it entails. We immediately picture ourselves buried in the midst of a thousand books, desperately typing our thoughts so as to meet a certain deadline that will, we hope, ensure a new publication.

This constant reminder of the *demand* to contribute to the ongoing debate is precisely what lies at the core of the MA subject Advanced Academic Abilities (AAA, see the syllabus at <https://www.uab.cat/guiesdocents/2019-20/g42287a2019-20iENG.pdf>). For any academic contribution to take place our students need to, first of all, be fully aware of the competences that they need to develop to successfully respond to critical material. As undergrads, they have already been asked to do so, as critical thinking is our main concern. Yet, as we know, students tend to rely on secondary material solely as a source of information to quote from. They usually reproduce what has been previously claimed without attempting to go beyond that in

any way. In the MA level, an active moment towards a more informed reading, one that incorporates the researcher's own stance, becomes imperative.

At the beginning of the AAA module, the very first thing I do is to distribute a needs analysis list in which students reflect on what they think that they *know* about academia. Usually, this list includes questions about how much support they require when carrying out the standard procedures of academic writing: reaching the (dreaded) thesis statement, drawing logical conclusions, making a correct use of citations, writing abstracts, and so on.

For students to become aware of their strengths and weaknesses as researchers is fundamental, as this realisation certainly helps them make an effort to try to upgrade all of the academic practices that they do not master yet. Satisfactorily *responding* to critical thought and incorporating that into their *own* vision are precisely the kind of skills that must be fostered throughout the MA.

A common misunderstanding among young researchers is the conviction that carrying out research merely consists in reading an awful lot and, then, simply recording what critics have said in a convincing manner. Part of the lecturer's duty is to exemplify that this is only the initial step, a starting point from which one reaches the desired destination: a critical analysis that unveils one's *own* stance.

In this respect, once students reach the postgraduate stage, it becomes absolutely essential for them to take their academic expertise to the next level. The AAA certainly does not intend to enlighten their minds with innovative, ground-breaking academic revelations but, at the very least, it exhibits the necessary adjustments to prepare them for their immediate academic future.

The course is organised around a three-block structure: block 1 deals with planning, block 2 with structuring their work and block 3 with formal aspects. In all three blocks, students are faced with a wide variety of samples from papers for them to assess. Those samples include different sections from academic papers: thesis statements, abstracts, introductions and conclusions, further research, and so on.

When provided with these excerpts, students carefully examine them so as to detect what can be improved and suggest ways to make them more academic. For the purpose of this course, I select poorly-written examples, all pertaining to the 'please do

not attempt this at home' prototype, which paves the way for students to contend how these could have been written in a much more focused and articulate manner.

Noticing mistakes in these samples is straightforward enough, as students all immediately gain a sixth sense to reveal others' shortcomings and expose how they would attempt to solve them. Smashing others' work without any argument is never an option. There must be a coherent purpose behind their corrections. Hence, stating that a certain piece of writing "offends me" invalidates the whole endeavour. By contrast, if one's criticism is oriented towards the potential that the author showed—but somehow wasted—the task ceases to be an invitation to only point out errors. Our fixation should be on understanding why the error occurred in the first place and, also, on acquiring mechanisms to refute that with which we do not fully agree.

After a thorough analysis of the weak points identified in the excerpts, I ask students to choose one of the samples as 'the best one within the bad' so that they can argue why that particular one, flawed as it may be, manages to survive the eradication act and can be somehow 'saved'. As writers, we often tend to concentrate excessively on what we do wrong, as if an imprecise or unclear idea or paragraph invalidated our whole writing production. Yet, students must remember that what truly matters is to discern those salvable parts within errors.

I observe that students struggle quite a lot when asked to select a 'somewhat good' sample since, to their own understanding, the texts I distribute are all beyond redemption. Yet, they gradually grow aware of the presence of some components which, with small modifications, improve the writing piece noticeably.

Once the samples have been carefully evaluated by students, the whole class engages in a group discussion in which they present their examination. This stimulates a critical outlook that goes beyond the right/wrong dichotomy and, instead, addresses not only problematic elements but also, crucially, strategies to effectively amend them.

In this respect, my intention in the module is always to establish a conversational tone with students which, ideally, should involve *all* of them. In practice, though, whilst some of them do indeed enthusiastically participate in class debates, some of them constantly assume a rather passive role. In a class like AAA (and in any class, for

that matter) that scenario is not the intended one, as a master class in which the lecturer provides endless theories about undertaking academic writing without students' involvement would make little sense, in my opinion.

Instead, the AAA lessons are all designed to generate student participation. First in small groups and, then, as a class. As always, within the safety of their group, students feel more comfortable sharing their ideas but, later, some of them do not wish to engage in any kind of class debate. I always let them know that part of the academic world consists in forwarding your ideas to others. Conferences, seminars, meetings, and all of those gatherings are proof of that. Knowledge is meant to be shared within a community; if you have great ideas but do not present those in an effective manner your message is somehow diminished because of that.

In class, marketing awareness is always a recurrent topic. 'Selling the motorbike' is something that academics are constantly forced to do, since convincing others of the validity of our arguments is as important as the arguments themselves. Demonstrating why our ideas matter is a common preoccupation that we, as researchers, are constantly faced with.

One of the activities I usually ask students to do consists precisely in this 'selling your ideas' necessity. Students select a topic of their interest and envision possible ways through which to arouse others' interest in that particular area. The idea that they are to awaken in their classmates' consciousness is clear: 'you definitely want to know about this, you just do not know it yet.' With this premise in mind, students have the quest to ensure their peers become as passionate about their chosen topic as they are, which is not as easy as one might imagine. Normally, students perform really well in this activity and, as a lecturer, I thoroughly enjoy witnessing their conscious efforts to justify why their topic is the best in the whole wide world.

Once their audience is absolutely hooked and desperately yearning for more, another vital demand appears: providing one's own stance. In order to test students' ability to introduce their position, I use a quote that all of them can easily relate to: "unsaid things stay with us forever". This involves creative writing, as students are allowed about twenty minutes to note down their stances before passing them onto someone else who will determine whether that stance is sufficiently clear.

When responding to this quote, some students do so in a purely linguistic level, by providing examples as to how language is so ambiguous and ethereal that what we often say is far from what we actually mean. Others take a much more literary approach and exemplify, for instance, that our silences are embedded by what we hide and that our caged thoughts imprison us in the same way that we repeatedly lock them inside of us. All students, through different mediums, manage to provide a clear stance, which enables them to realise that for us to fully grasp the meaning behind critics' views, our own perspective on the matter needs to be established beforehand.

In this way, students develop an acute awareness of the fact that quoting (or paraphrasing) from a certain source is not just the mere act of reproducing some words but, actually, much more than that: those utterances are meant to confirm, deny and, even, clarify our own understanding.

Apart from providing a stance, of course, a researcher must make sure that the message does indeed get across. This is the rationale behind what I call the 'creative experiment' we carry out in class. For this experiment, students select a quote and quickly offer their response, without having much time to delve into it. The quotes students have to choose from are the following: "All we have to do is decide what to do with the time that is given us", "whatever our souls are made of, his and mine are the same", "How long is forever? Sometimes just one second" and "Man is in love and loves what vanishes. What more is there to say?"

To respond to the quote no prior knowledge of the author or the literary work is required, as the goal is not for students to produce a literary analysis but, rather, a brief paragraph of what comes to their mind the moment they read the quote. Some language students, much more accustomed to responding to data, perhaps find this task quite daunting but, overall, most students embrace the opportunity to nurture their creative side. The paragraph that is produced is later reviewed by someone from the class who, then, clarifies to what extent the author has been coherent enough.

In AAA, peer review-based tasks are constantly done as, I believe, the feedback students obtain from one another is extremely valuable for them. During the course, I make the, carry out a specific peer review activity in which they write something related to their field of interest and ask someone in the class to review what they have

written. The motto I use in this case is “kill ‘em with kindness”, since it is important for students to bear in mind that to take a constructive viewpoint when assessing others’ work is compulsory. Peer reviewing is meant to provide support for the writer not discouragement.

To do this peer review task, I provide a topic for students to develop in a couple of paragraphs. Once students have written their piece, one of their classmates reads it and takes note of both positive and negative elements that they observe. This peer reviewing session is always very fruitful, as students benefit tremendously from assuming the role of reviewers and taking responsibility for someone else’s work.

All things considered, the AAA module is a highly permeable subject that endows the lecturer with numerous possibilities to approach the teaching of academic writing with the exciting mission of guiding young researchers as they enter the world of academia. This world is certainly not an easy one but, as long as one enters it fully informed of all that it involves, it has the potential to become a fulfilling career choice with its lights and shadows, just like anything else in the enigmatic world we live in.

MARVIN SÁNCHEZ MUÑOZ. ACADEMIC SHOCK: FEELING AND FILLING THE VOID FROM FIRST TO SECOND YEAR

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ABSTRACT: Within the transition from 1st year to 2nd year, some students face a hard time coming to terms with newly encountered subjects, those being Phonetics I and Usos de la Llengua Anglesa I. The following paper will showcase these hurdles and will give some student-based insight as to why they occur. Interestingly, it will provide the reader with some possible solutions to mitigate the struggle. Results will show that lack of input and contextualisation prior to commencement of the aforementioned subjects is the main responsible for such shock. The need arises, thus, for some implicit insights into the contents of those second-year subjects in earlier stages to prevent, or at the very least to quench our perceived academic shock. Future works could demonstrate whether our recommendations were taken into account and provide feedback on their usefulness.

KEYWORDS: Academic shock, struggle, input, Usos de la Llengua, Phonetics, Linguistics, papers, Literature

The starting point for the present paper is first year students of English Studies at UAB who after some hurdles and rough times have successfully made it up the ladder and commenced their second year. It is needless to say that for us, students, it is the second year that does mark the real beginning of our degree, given that it is in the second year that we are faced with nuclear subjects of our degree, those being Phonetics and Usos de la Llengua, for example. Although this paper upholds a more linguistic slant, special mention will be made to the issue around ‘papers’ from the literature side. In the end, through entailment of struggles, a simile will be drawn between linguistics and literature from second year to portray the harmony between the different struggles to be presented.

First, what is meant by academic shock is a feeling of lack of knowledge, self-esteem and of self-confidence of second year students, henceforward our avatar students, that originates from the fact that they feel unable to meet ends with the demands of the subject. This anxiety stems from clearly diversified reasons, and is felt

in different capacities. For the time being, we will itemise those reasons for the reader to be able to understand why the use of such powerful word ‘shock’.

Let us scrutinise Phonetics I for starters. Theoretical framework and definitions will not come into play because students can devour the concepts and internalise the definitions to either remember them for eternity or for a coming exam, scratch points in the exam even if being vague, and then that is it. The struggle is to be found in the practical side, which develops in this fashion: Students are engulfed in an almost new language, that of phonemes and allophones. They are launched with a new inventory of sounds which, despite ringing them a bell from Catalan classes back in first and/or second of *Batxillerat*, is oftentimes ‘a new English’. That in itself is not the problem, but the fact that they are asked to associate those phonemes with their actual speech within a short time frame. Mapping that in our academic brains and storing the sounds might be troublesome, but what presents the greatest hurdle is, without a doubt, matching the screened phonemes with the actual sounds from our speech. Students in Phonetics I are expected to learn the symbols and be able to transcribe words and sentences in a short amount of time and that is where the problem might lie .

The concept of ‘different capacities’ is iterated now as a means of disclaimer. Individual differences certainly determine each student’s pace of learning. Perhaps one student who is greater at phonetics might find it easier to learn the sounds of English and transcribe them, while another might struggle and feel frustration. We are going to applaud exceptional cases who find no struggle whatsoever in understanding transcription and will concentrate on the vast majority of students taking phonetics.

The first course on phonetics entails some dense theoretical concepts and sometimes time for practice is scarce. Consonants and vowels must click into students’ brains in a completely new fashion as they are about to start traversing the world of transcription, and they must do so in such a short amount of time to pass muster with the pieces of assessment spaced throughout the subject. Specifically, it has been felt that academic shock stems both from the inability to transcribe correctly and mixing up sounds because students’ minds become fogged with so many new sounds. Coping with this cloudiness is certainly difficult, but thanks to timely practice in class, the pack of exercises, office hours and some extracurricular oral practice run by an intern,

students' mission to cope with phonetics becomes more feasible. Thus, a plea must be made to the professors' effort to drill as much practice as deviation from the syllabus allows.

The present paper presents a potential solution for this shock. The starting point is that explicit knowledge of sounds is taught in Phonetics I, and students are at pains to disentangle one sound from another and internalise them all in their pronunciation. If what appears to be lacking is time due to students' giving in to pressure and demotivation as a result of scarce time to meet the demands of the subject, why not make some implicit reference to phonetic symbols and pronunciation in 'Usos Bàsics de la Llengua Anglesa I and II' and other linguistic-based subjects from the first year? Perhaps some ear-training could work, where transcription could be offered besides new items and students could be implicitly trained to notice the differing sounds by means of repetition of the item in question. The advantages to implementing this would be threefold: (i) students would implicitly work on their pronunciation (ii) they would begin to notice subtleties and nuances in English sounds, which may well spark interest to improve one's pronunciation and pique one's curiosity to autonomously work on transcription; (iii) students would be anticipated some second year knowledge and by the time they reached Phonetics I, they would have already been acquainted with the English sounds inventory. The key outcome to this practice would go as follows: students would acknowledge a sense of progress and continuity, at which our degree aims, and they would see it reflected in the following evolutionary subjects: 'Fonètica Anglesa I', 'Fonètica Anglesa II' 'Expressió Oral Avançada', 'Fonètica Anglesa Avançada' and 'Fonologia Anglesa Avançada'.

Such implicit practices could have a contrarian effect and actually demotivate first year students were they unable to decipher the correct pronunciation. Nevertheless, they would certainly anticipate content and soften some of the fogginess. Ultimately, what we want to achieve is drawing students towards an adequate pronunciation, implicitly training them to work on their mispronunciations. Therefore, the main aim is to help them to become aware of what elements they need to tackle in Phonetics I.

Now we will glide towards 'Usos de la llengua Anglesa I'. An overhaul of the English instrumental subjects spanning from first to third year was called and is now in motion, which means that in the coming years, the subjects 'Usos Bàsics de la Llengua Anglesa I i II', 'Usos de la Llengua Anglesa I i II' and 'Expressió Escrita Avançada', as we know them, will disappear. In exchange, more academic-laden subjects, that is, subjects devoted to the development of EAP skills (English for Academic Purposes) will be engineered to foster acquisition of tools for academic settings and as scaffolding for the progressive higher level of entrance of students into our degree. In practical matters, there is another component to fronting EAP-related subjects to first year that is related to literature -and linguistics- 'papers', and which the reader may well perceive. In any case, that restructuration will not take place in the short-term, so some issues from Usos de la Llengua Anglesa will be addressed *ad interim*.

First, it appears as though students fail to bridge the gap between an advanced and a proficient level of English according to the Common Framework of European Reference. They are asked to pass a CPE-based test (Certificate of Proficiency in English) which usually requires plentiful specific preparation and exam-format training, with a minimum grade of 6 to meet the requirements of the course. However, it is felt that the approach taken in class is not efficient enough to aid students towards that passing grade. In other words, it has been noted that activities such as Précis and coursebook activities, while pedagogically engaging, are not exam oriented, and hence appear not to prepare students well enough for the upcoming tests.

This paper will mention three different ways in which Usos de la Llengua Anglesa I and II can be optimised according to students' purview on behalf of our experience: First, replacing the current coursebook for Cambridge-test based packs and working on these as regular classroom exercises with the aim to familiarise students with the formatting of CPE exams and teach them exclusive exam-related lexis. Second, dispensing with précis and investing class time in real CPE listenings and readings. Whilst far less engaging than précis, they are more practical. In addition to this, they can spark some discussions which benefit students in two ways. On the one hand, they receive feedback from the professor and, on the other hand, they practice for the final test. Finally, in order to recur with the kind of assessment from Usos Bàsics, CPE-based

exams could be replaced for coursebook-based exams, where lexis and grammar from the coursebook are the main elements to assess our avatar students on. This way, the assessment of 'Usos de la Lengua Anglesa' would be the same as that of its predecessor, so continuity and progress would be attained again, as there would be a sense of recursivity but at a higher level. Furthermore, students could be provided with material to work on their own so as to make it easier for them to bridge the aforementioned gap. At the very least, students would appreciate being warned about the format of the final test, so they can come more prepared. In addition to this, students might be more proactive and might put as much work as necessary to bridge the gap, so implementation of repair strategies and independent hard work ought to leverage students' performance.

A major fault is identified here and now. No account is taken of low-performing students who, despite consistent effort and endless motivation, are not able to meet the demands of the course, so this gap is food for thought for future investigations. However, it appears that the majority of students who struggle and do not pass, have not worked hard enough to overcome that struggle, and it comes into play that there is a limit to what a teacher can do owing to the fact that each group holds about 20-40 students, making keeping individual track a fatigable endeavour. Therefore, the solutions proposed in the present paper can be most effective if actual work and study from students is taken for granted

Our last consideration will be devoted to 'papers'. This section's academic shock involves being unable to neither produce qualifiable pieces of work nor strictly follow the department's stylesheet, which results in dissatisfaction from both parties: professors and students. On the one hand, professors feel as though some students are careless about their English, fail to comply with the stylesheet, or are misleadingly overconfident about their writing style. These are two sides of the same coin since overconfidence might result in carelessness, and the other way round. On the other hand, students perceive of papers as a grey area of doubt and there is a seemingly mysticism enveloping 'papers' which is difficult to abate because for as many instructions on how to write a paper are written and material facilitated, one does never get to the bottom of the matter. We propose some ways to help aid instructions

on papers: (i) Posting some exemplar papers from former students and by professors related to the topic, or unrelated on condition it contains phraseology and taxonomy which students can model in their work, (ii) scrutinising an exemplar paper by having the professor comment on its strongest elements on a macrostructural and microstructural level. (iii) Emphasising on the use of correct, academic use of English. Perhaps students could be drilled with some sentence-transformation exercises where they must rephrase the original sentence for a more academic-like one while maintaining meaning. In sum, it is felt that students can learn the most with a more thorough and introspective the look on the paper.

To conclude, this paper has put forward two key factors in understanding academic shock. First, acquisition of phonemic symbols, of C2 CEFR level and academic language all vary between different students due to individual differences in their domain of the language onset of the nuclear subjects or different personal skill sets. It might be that proficiency in the language might positively affect acquisition of the other skills, but that does not necessarily have to be true. Secondly, academic shock is a fundamental issue to tackle because it recurs in the different subjects at the same time. Therefore, it is in both linguistics and literature subjects that students need to quash their doubts and be given some optimal practice for them to better store the different elements learnt in the different subjects. These solutions are, in fact, destined at dissipating discontentment from both teachers and students. Given our degree's commitment to striving for excellence, it is positive that teachers and students work abreast, this will ensure common goals and will foster participation and interest on the part of students.

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