



Università
Ca'Foscari
Venezia

Corso di Dottorato di ricerca
in Scienze del Linguaggio
ciclo XXIX

Tesi di Ricerca

**Parallel blogging as an
interactive pedagogical
tool to enhance writing
skills in EAP contexts**

SSD: L-LIN/02

Coordinatore del Dottorato
Prof.ssa Alessandra Giorgi

Supervisore
Prof.ssa Carmel Mary Coonan

Dottorando
Viorica Condrat
Matricola 956102

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First and foremost, I would like to express my profound gratitude to my doctoral advisor, Professor Carmel Coonan, whose constant guidance and encouragement helped me to complete this study. I remain deeply grateful to Professor Coonan for helping me discover passion for research and encouraging me to persevere even when I felt discouraged and confused. I shall always remember the first recommendation given by my doctoral advisor, which was ‘Find your niche, Vicky’. These words marked my research and shaped my personality as an aspiring researcher. I thank professor Coonan for allowing me to find my own niche and for constantly offering valuable guidance.

I would also like to thank the professors from the department of Linguistics and Comparative Cultural Studies, in particular, the professors Paolo Balboni, Fabio Caon, and Graziano Serragiotto. Attending their seminars and classes helped me to discover the Venetian school of thought and gain new insights in the field of language education.

I wish to give special thanks to my fellow doctoral candidates with whom I shared so many pleasant and interesting moments. They have also contributed to my academic development by offering advice, but above all by constantly encouraging me not to give up.

I deeply appreciate the opportunity given to me by the WEBB programme, an Erasmus Mundus Action 2 project funded with the support of the European Commission. It provided the unique occasion to study and do research at Ca’Foscari University of Venice.

I also appreciate the support offered by the staff of Alecu Russo Balti State University where the research was conducted. In particular, I am grateful to the Department of English and Germanic Philology where I received great encouragement.

Last but not least I would like to thank my family and friends whose unconditional love and support have made all this possible. I will remain greatly indebted to them for their patience and faith in me. They supported my efforts and understood my wish to achieve the set goal. They all have contributed to its realization.

Contents

INTRODUCTION	11
PART 1: LITERATURE REVIEW.....	18
Chapter 1 : Academic Writing as Communication within a Specific Discourse Community	20
1.1. Writing as Communication	20
1.2. The Ethnography of Writing	22
1.3. Writing in English for Academic Purposes Contexts	28
1.4. Towards a Model of Academic Writing as Communicative Language Use	32
Chapter 2 : Pedagogical Approaches to Teaching Writing Skills in EAP	42
2.1 Contrastive Rhetoric and its Implications to Teaching Writing	44
2.2 Product Approach to Writing	45
2.3 Process Approach to Writing	47
2.3.1 Post-Process Approach to Writing	50
2.4 Genre-Based Approach to Writing	52
Chapter 3 : Technology Supported Academic Writing	57
3.1 Educational Technology and its Impact on the Learning Process.....	58
3.2 Computer Assisted Language Learning	61
3.3 Writing and Technology	65
3.4 Academic Writing in an Electronic Age.....	69
Chapter 4 : Blogging and its Relevance in an EAP Writing Classroom.....	74
4.1 Definitions	75
4.2 Blogging Practice and its Application to Language Education.....	76
4.3 Blogging and Academic Writing.....	78
4.4 Enhancing Interactivity in Academic Settings through Blogging.....	80
PART 2: THE STUDY	85
Chapter 5 : Methodology	87
5.1 Type of Research	87
5.1.1 Research Paradigm.....	87
5.1.2 Research Approach	88

5.1.3	Research Problem and Research Questions.....	90
5.1.4	Research Method.....	93
5.2	Research Setting.....	94
5.2.1	Research Participants	95
5.2.2	Description of the Experiment.....	98
5.2.3	Blogging Mechanism	100
5.2.4	Writing Objectives and Weekly Assignments	102
5.3	Data Collection and Procedures	105
5.3.1	Background Questionnaires.....	105
5.3.2	Documents	106
5.3.3	Pre – treatment Interviews.....	107
5.3.4	Post – treatment Surveys	107
5.3.5	Participants’ Posts	108
5.3.6	Researcher’s Field Notes.....	108
5.4	Data Analysis.....	109
5.5	Researcher’s Role	112
5.6	Validity of the Research Findings	113
Chapter 6 : Results Related to the First Focus of the Research		115
6.1	The Importance of Academic Writing Considered in Context	115
6.2	Results Related to Research Question 1: Students’ Perception of Academic Writing	121
6.2.1	Results Related to Subquestion 1.1: Students’ Common Difficulties	130
6.2.2	Results Related to Subquestion 1.2: the Impact of the WWW on Student’s Writing.	140
Chapter 7 : Results Related to the Second Focus of the Research.....		148
7.1	Results Related to Research Question 2: Participants’ Profiles	148
	Student 1: Active aspiring writer	149
	Student 2: Interested aspiring writer	151
	Student 3: Determined aspiring writer	154
	Student 4: Disoriented aspiring writer.....	156
	Student 5: Creative aspiring writer.....	160
	Student 6: Questioning aspiring writer.....	161
7.2	Results Related to Research Question 2: Participants’ Progress.....	164
7.2.1	Results Related to Subquestion 2.1: Students’ Reactions to the Use of Blogs.....	176
7.2.2	Results Related to Subquestion 2.2: Strategies to Motivate the Students	183
7.2.3	Results Related to Subquestion 2.3: Teacher’s Role	188

Chapter 8 : Discussions, Implications, and Recommendations	195
8.1 Discussion of Results in Relationship to the Literature Review	195
8.2 Aspects of Blogging Useful for the Development of Academic Writing Skills.....	199
8.3 Students' Perceptions in Using Blogs for Academic Writing Tasks.....	205
8.4 Researcher's Perceptions in Using Blogs to Enhance Academic Writing Skills	206
8.5 Pedagogical Considerations	208
8.5.1 Approach to Writing.....	208
8.5.2 Teacher's Role	211
8.5.3 Student's Role	212
8.6 Critical Aspects of the Use of Blogs	213
8.7 Limitations of the Study.....	215
8.8 Implication of the Study for Further Research and Practice	215
Conclusions	218
 BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	 221
 Appendix 1: Swale's model of a research paper	 238
Appendix 2: Students' Questionnaires	239
Appendix 3: Teachers' Questionnaires	245
Appendix 4: Tb Homepage	251
Appendix 5: The Writing Lab Page on Tb	252
Appendix 6: Assignments on Tb.....	253
Appendix 7: Features of academic writing Page on Tb.....	254
Appendix 8: Weekly Assignments and Objectives	256
Appendix 9: Semi-structured pre-treatment interview	258
Appendix 10: Structured post-treatment survey	259
Appendix 11: Field Note Form	261
Appendix 12: Codes.....	263
Appendix 13: Rubric to Measure Students' Performance	265
Appendix 14: Rubric to Measure Students' Attitude	267
Appendix 15: What the best way to enhance academic writing skills is?.....	268
Appendix 16: On reading supplementary materials to be used in writing	269
Appendix 17: The students' and teachers' attitude concerning academic writing as an act of communication within their small discourse community	270

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Undergraduate degree programme in English Language and Literature	116
Table 2: Undergraduate degree programme in Modern Languages.....	116
Table 3: Students' performance during the experiment	149
Table 4: Students' involvement in the experiment in numbers	164
Table 5: Students' progress during the experiment	175
Table 6: Development of academic writing skills	175
Table 7: Students' overall reaction on the use of blogs	177
Table 8: Students' experiences of writing their posts	177
Table 9: The students' focus while commenting	178
Table 10: The dates when the students made their posts	180
Table 11: Students' attitude to the use of blogs numerically displayed	182
Table 12: Skype conference dates	190
Table 13: Students' linguistic behaviour during Skype conferences.....	191

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Model of parameters involved in writing	27
Figure 2: Considerations in academic writing.....	35
Figure 3: Model of adoption of both "idea" and "product" technologies in education	60
Figure 4: Action research cycle.....	89
Figure 5: Research relationship model.....	97
Figure 6: Teacher-student relationship model.....	99
Figure 7: The interaction model.....	101
Figure 8: What makes a writer motivated?	138
Figure 9: Motivating factors in the process of personal writing	139
Figure 10: Interaction model during Skype conferences	190

LIST OF CHARTS

Chart 1: Writing assignments across disciplines	119
Chart 2: Students' responses regarding types of writing they are expected to produce.....	121
Chart 3: Teachers' responses regarding types of writing students are asked to produce.....	122
Chart 4: The respondents' understanding of what academic writing is.....	123
Chart 5: Teachers' and students' responses confronted.....	123
Chart 6: How do students prepare for writing?	124
Chart 7: How do you prepare for writing?	125
Chart 8: What do you pay most attention to?	125
Chart 9: Students' response regarding the sites they use most	127
Chart 10: Students' response regarding the use of Wikipedia as a source in their writing.....	128
Chart 11: Students' responses regarding what they do after finishing writing.....	129
Chart 12: Academic writing is above all an interaction between the student and the teacher.....	130
Chart 13: Skills to be improved	131

Chart 14: Students' response to how they perceive writing a text in English	132
Chart 15: Teachers' responses to whether it is challenging for students to write a text in English	132
Chart 16: The respondents' understanding of approaching writing	133
Chart 17: Teachers' suggestions to approach writing	134
Chart 18: Students' responses regarding the clarity of the teacher's indications	135
Chart 19: Teachers' responses regarding the students' understanding of what they are expected to write about	135
Chart 20: Techniques to improve academic writing skills	136
Chart 21: Students' responses to how often they use internet	141
Chart 22: Teachers' responses to how often they use internet	141
Chart 23: Technology can help improve the students' writing skills.....	142
Chart 24: Posting one's writing online makes the writing process more interactive.....	144
Chart 25: Posting one's writing online makes the writer more responsible as to the form and contents of his/her writing.....	144
Chart 26: Posting one's writing online makes the writer consider the reader's expectations more	145
Chart 27: S1 progress.....	165
Chart 28: S2 progress.....	167
Chart 29: S3 progress.....	169
Chart 30: S4 progress.....	170
Chart 31: S5 progress.....	172
Chart 32: S6 progress.....	174
Chart 33: Students' attitude to the use of blogs graphically presented.....	181

INTRODUCTION

Both researchers and teachers in language education continuously search for the optimal way of enhancing the students' learning process as well as boosting their motivation. Their interest is also to make the students become more responsible for their own learning. Thus, while aiming to develop the four basic skills, i.e. speaking, reading, listening, and writing, new tools and strategies are being considered in order to achieve the set pedagogical goals. The relatively recent interest in the use of advanced technology, both inside and outside the classroom, has proved to be worth considering while designing the instructional process.

The writing skill is a primary skill to be acquired by students in order to become fluent in their writing. It is a skill that can be acquired only after the previous three have been developed. Moreover, learning to produce coherent and cohesive texts in a foreign language becomes even more challenging for non-native speakers of that language. Hence the necessity for a conceptual framework that will help teachers to scaffold the students' learning process and thus help them to develop their writing skills.

Being viewed as another form of communication (Widdowson, 1984; Nystrand, 1986; Grabe and Kaplan, 1998; Candlin and Hyland, 1999), writing is a paramount skill in academia, where it becomes a means via which knowledge and thoughts are communicated to the academic community.

Writing for academic purposes should be considered of utmost importance by higher institutions and be integrated in the curriculum. Throughout their cycle of study, students have to submit a substantial number of papers as part of the curriculum. Similarly, they are expected to take certain examinations in written, where again their fluency and accuracy are to be taken into consideration. Moreover, becoming fluent in writing is vital for the students' academic growth who want to be recognised as members of a particular discourse community sharing the same background knowledge and conventions. Indeed the students' ability to express fluently and accurately their thoughts and knowledge acknowledges the students' affiliation to an academic community. Thus their success in communicating via the written text will depend on what conventional knowledge they share (Bhatia, 1999).

As academic writing has its own set of socio-linguistic norms and features, teachers need to search for the optimal context that will help the students to develop their writing skills (Celce-Murcia and Olshtain, 2000, DeLuca, 2002). Instead of deciding upon a single approach

to teaching writing, teachers are advised to consider blending approaches (Nunan, 2005) that will help students to develop their academic writing skills.

With the advance of information and communication technology, it has become obvious that a reconceptualization of the teaching process is needed. Nowadays, educational technology is being integrated in the teaching process in order to help the teachers to achieve the set pedagogical goals. Educational technology has proved to enhance the acquisition of writing skills, making the instructional process more motivational.

The use of blogs can be viewed as a pedagogical tool that helps the students in their writing process. Blogging can offer the best context for the writing to take place in an academic related setting. Research conducted in the area has shown the positive outcomes of blogging when used for academic writing tasks (Fellner and Apple, 2006; Kavaliauskienė et al., 2006a, 2006b; Murray et al., 2007; Williams and Jacobs, 2004). Teachers need however to clearly envisage the possible outcomes of the use of blogs and determine in what way blogging can help the students to become more confident writers.

Nevertheless some researchers are reserved concerning the benefits of blogging in the students' development of academic writing skills (Lin et al., 2013). In their opinion, blogging can little contribute to it. As research conducted in the field is not exhaustive, we believe that the issue of blogging used for academic writing tasks is worth investigating. Thus the primary purpose of our research is to determine whether the use of blogs can help the students to develop their academic writing skills in English.

The personal interest in determining the cause of the students' poor quality writing prompted us to conduct the present action research. Relying on personal experience as well as on the feedback received from various colleagues, we believe that it is worth conducting a detailed field enquiry into the existing problem. Doing action research allows us to act and to decide upon what solution can help to solve the problem. In particular we will try to understand whether blogging can help in the development of students' academic writing skills.

Our research has been conducted at Alecu Russo Balti State University of Moldova, where students are expected to produce quite a substantial number of written papers in English. It is the optimal context as the English language at the Faculty of Philology is used for academic purposes and it allows us to determine what hampers the students' writing process in English. In addition, the students are technologically friendly, which facilitates the implementation of blogging in their learning process.

Thus, the study has two main foci, i.e. to discover the students' perception of academic writing in general, on the one hand, and consider whether blogging can be used as a tool to

enhance the students' academic writing skills, on the other. We believe that by determining the cause of students' poor quality writing for academic purposes it will become easier to decide upon what can be done in order to change this situation. We also believe that the use of blogs for academic writing tasks can help the students to become more fluent and accurate in their writing.

By triangulating the results from the gathered data it is possible to explore the relationship between blogging and the students' development of academic writing skills. In particular, we shall analyse the students' progress in writing, their behaviours, and their opinions related to both academic writing and blogging. We shall also look into the teachers' perceptions of the students' academic writing skills and determine whether they consider blogging as a solution that can help the students in their writing process. We believe that this research will contribute to our understanding of how writing in EAP contexts can be improved in the age of globalization.

The decision to consider blogging as a tool that may boost the students' performance on written assignments is due to the possibilities blogging offer. It is believed that it can support effective learning and boost interactivity among students (Williams and Jacobs, 2004; Zhang, 2009; Sun, Chang, 2012). Thus students may all contribute to each other development of academic writing skills by sharing and constructing knowledge in parallel. They will be able to develop not only their writing skills, but also their critical thinking – a skill of primary importance in academic writing. In addition they will be able to form a small academic community where their interactions on an academic level will unfold.

As mentioned the study has two main foci. Therefore the present study aims to find the answers to two central questions:

Question 1 related to the first research focus: What is the students' understanding of academic writing?

1.1: What are the most common struggles students encounter in the process of writing for academic purposes?

1.2: What is the impact of the World Wide Web on their writing for academic purposes?

Question 2 related to the second research focus: Does blogging enhance academic writing skills?

2.1: How do students respond to the use of blogs for academic writing tasks?

2.2: What strategies might the teacher apply in order to help the students to improve their academic writing skills?

2.3: What is the role of the teacher?

In order to find the answer to the set research questions, mixed-methods approach will be used. While dealing with the first focus of the research the data from the two background questionnaires will be analysed. Whereas, while dealing with the second focus of the research, data taken from several sources will be analysed (e.g. students' posts, students' pre-treatment interviews, students' post-treatment surveys, and observation field notes). The main method of analysis is content analysis method, which allows to search for rich meanings and a deeper understanding of the topic, as well as to carry out some very basic quantitative procedures (Norton, 2009).

The structure of the research is as follows. The paper is divided in two main parts: (1) Literature review, and (2) The Study, each part consisting of four chapters.

This first part reviews literature in the field of academic writing and the use of blogs as a pedagogical tool. It consists of four chapters. The first chapter reviews the existing literature in the field of academic writing. It aims to reveal a model of academic writing as communicative language use. It is important to see in what way language is used to convey messages to a particular readership. That is why special attention is devoted to reader awareness development in students, who are supposed to realize that their text will be shaped by their potential readers' expectations. As the paper is devoted to writing in EAP contexts, several models will be considered that might help the students to develop their writing skills optimally.

The second chapter will focus on the approaches to academic writing. In particular its aim is to try to understand what the ideal context for the enhancement of academic writing might be. As known, students are required not only to tell the knowledge but also to transform it. That is why, instructors should be aware of the approaches that might help them to achieve these pedagogical goals. They should consider the notion of contrastive rhetoric, which might help them to understand better in what way students could be assisted in avoiding the transposition of mother tongue patterns into the English language. Approaches focusing on the final product, the process of writing, and the socio-cultural context and function of the text will be presented further on.

The third chapter is an overview of the impact information and communication technology is having nowadays on the teaching / learning process. Main educational technology tools will

be briefly introduced, as well as the benefits they might bring if they are judiciously integrated into the process. Special attention will be devoted to computer assisted language learning as a modern classroom is difficult to imagine without the use of computers. The interest is to see in what way educational technology can help to improve students' writing skills in academic contexts.

In the fourth chapter of the first part, blogging and its relevance in EAP contexts will be dealt with. We will proceed first by defining what a blog is and what its features are. Afterwards, a brief review of the literature on blogging application to education will be presented. Then research results of the use of blogging in the writing classroom will be examined. Special attention will be devoted to ways of enhancing interactivity in academic settings as this might be a way of helping students to become more confident writers. The role of the instructor will also be delineated in this review.

The second part is devoted to the analysis of the results of the undertaken study. It also discusses the findings, offering recommendations and pointing to the limitations of the study. Like Part 1, Part 2 also consists of four chapters.

The fifth chapter outlines the quantitative and qualitative methodology employed for this study, beginning with an overview of the research paradigm and research approach. This is followed by pointing to the research problem and formulating the research questions. The research site and the study participants are overviewed next. This chapter also includes a detailed description of the blogging mechanism and presents the writing objectives and weekly assignments the students from the focus group are expected to do. We describe the procedures of data collection and analysis that will be employed next. Issues related to researcher's role and validity of the research findings will be also discussed in the fifth chapter.

The sixth chapter of the study illustrates the findings related to the first focus of the research. In particular, it displays the results regarding the students' perception of academic writing as well as the teachers' perception of the way students acquire academic writing skills. It is believed that the findings will help us to determine the cause to the existing problem of the students' poor quality academic writing. In order to answer the addressed questions, data gathered from the background questionnaires will be analysed. Similarly, we believe that the analysis of such local document as: the undergraduate degree programmes, curricula, and guidelines for writing research papers will offer significant insights as well.

The seventh chapter is devoted to revealing the findings to the second focus of the research. In particular, the contents of the students' blogs and their comments will be examined here. This analysis will help to determine whether blogging can enhance the students' academic writing skills and create the sense of a small micro-community among them. The students' profiles will be described in this chapter as well. It will allow us to better understand the impact the use of blogs has had on the students from the focus group. The analysis of the data will permit us to determine the students' reactions towards the use of blogs, as well as the way their interactions on an academic level can unfold. It will also provide information related to the role the teacher has in the students' process of developing academic writing skills.

The last chapter of the study discusses the findings analysed in the sixth and seventh chapters. This will allow us to conclude whether blogging can be used as a pedagogical tool to assist students in the development of their academic writing skills. We will try to determine the positive outcomes of the experiment. Yet, issues that appeared during the experiment will be addressed in this chapter as well. Recommendations will also be given in the eighth chapter. We will speak about the limitations of our study, and about possible implication for further research.

We believe that this study is significant as examining the use of blogs in the students' development of academic writing skills will provide evidence of the usefulness of educational technology for teaching writing. It will help the teachers to consider a new context for academic writing to take place. It will also contribute to a better understanding of how to scaffold the students' writing process for academic purposes in a foreign language. With the knowledge gained from this study, it will be possible for foreign language teachers, researchers, and curriculum planners to gain insight into how students use blogs for academic interaction and writing skills development.

PART 1:

LITERATURE REVIEW

Chapter 1 :

Academic Writing as Communication within a Specific Discourse

Community

This part is meant to show that academic writing should not be perceived as a non-reciprocal act of communication. Instead it should be considered as a communication act happening within a particular discourse community sharing the same background knowledge. Both the writer and the reader of an academic text virtually communicate with one another via the written text. The writer is aware of the reader's presence in the production process, whereas the reader is aware of the writer's presence in the reception process. They encode and respectively decode the intended message employing the specific conventions of the discourse community they are affiliated to.

In the subchapters below academic writing is considered as a reciprocal act of communication not necessarily involving the physical presence of its participants. Their interaction is shaped by the background knowledge they share, and by the expectations they have for each other.

The primary aim of this part is to draw a possible model of academic writing that will enable the aspiring academic writers to achieve their communicative goals. We will proceed from analysing writing as communication in general towards gradually narrowing down our focus on writing in English for academic purposes. It is essential to delineate the competence a proficient writer should develop in order to succeed in academic writing. We will describe the specificity of writing in English for academic contexts. In particular we will try to understand what needs to be done to help the students to acquire the necessary skills that will enable them to produce appropriate texts for the academic community they are affiliated to.

1.1. Writing as Communication

Writing, in general, is another form of human communication (Widdowson, 1984; Nystrand, 1986; Grabe and Kaplan, 1998; Candlin and Hyland, 1999; Celce-Murcia and Olshtain, 2000) involving a sender, i.e. the writer; a receiver, i.e. the reader; and a concrete

socio-cultural context influencing the processes of encoding and, respectively, decoding the intended message. The participants are supposed to make use of the same linguistic code, whereas the channel is primarily visual. Like in most cases of human interaction, the participants should be familiar not only with the linguistic norms (language usage) but also with the socio-cultural conventions that govern this specific act of communication (language use). At the same time, it is a particular type of exchange due to the non-immediate physical presence of the interlocutor. This, however, does not imply that it is a non-reciprocal act of communication as the writer should develop reader awareness in the production process if he/she wants the message to be decoded appropriately; similarly, the reader should develop writer awareness in the reception process.

As seen, writing is an intricate process requiring the presence of certain abilities and skills that will help the writer translate the knowledge he/she wants to communicate into the final product which is the written discourse. Writing in a foreign language is even more challenging as the writer is expected to have a good mastery of the linguistic norms as well as of the socio-cultural factors that affect the act of communication in that particular language. Such a process implies ‘the incorporation of a range of cultural knowledge and experience in any individual response to a writing task’ (Candlin and Hyland, 1999: 11) in more or less conventionalised ways. It thus becomes essential to help foreign language students acquire this productive skill that will enable them to manipulate the given norms and conventions of the foreign language so that they interact appropriately through the visual medium and not lose their own voice. Indeed, ‘every act of writing is in a sense both personal and individual, it is also interactional and social, expressing a culturally recognised purpose, reflecting a particular kind of relationship and acknowledging an engagement in a given community’ (Hyland, 2009b: 42).

Depending on the type of writing to be produced, the writer will approach the given task differently. He/she will engage virtually with the community to which the work is addressed and will try to meet the expectations of that particular readership. This will involve the use of different strategies in the process of writing. For example, an email to a close friend will follow the characteristic features of this particular type of personal writing. It will significantly differ from an email addressed to a professor where the linguistic and stylistic conventions of academic writing are to be enacted. Therefore the need for an operational model to be used by the writer/student arises.

1.2. The Ethnography of Writing

A model should provide the framework that will help to generate performance, i.e. will enable the student to write. William Grabe and Robert B. Kaplan (1998) argue for the necessity of establishing an ethnography of writing which will help to find an answer to the question of what writing is. It will also help to understand the features involved in the process. In the authors' opinion, the first step in elaborating an ethnography of writing is to consider the classic model of narration based on the well-known 'Wh'-questions. Thus, one should find the answer to the following: *Who writes what to whom, for what purpose, why, when, where, and how?* (Grabe and Kaplan, 1998: 203).

The first parameter of this model includes the person who is responding to a task in written form. It is an important element to be considered as the final product depends on who the writer is. Thus, a student whose level of proficiency in English is intermediate will produce a different text from the one written by a native speaker of English. Or, the writing of a student revealing the research results in a paper will differ from the article written by an acclaimed researcher in the same field.

The question of who the writer is highlights several aspects worth considering. On the one hand, we can note the importance of the person's experience as a writer, i.e. a more experienced writer is expected to produce better works than a beginner. On the other, it implies that writing is influenced by the writer's identity. This issue, however, raises some questions. When it comes to personal writing, such a perspective is accepted, even anticipated, due to the subjectivity of this type of writing. Yet, objectivity and impersonality are required in other types, as for example in academic writing. This does not imply that the writer's individuality should be totally excluded. In this respect, Ken Hyland maintains that writers need to project themselves in order to sound credible and involve the reader in the decoding process; in his opinion 'the use of stance'¹ is an important aspect of professional academic discourse, conveying the field-specific expressive and interpersonal meanings which help readers to evaluate information and writers to gain acceptance for their work' (Hyland, 1999: 120).

¹ 'Stance refers to the ways that writers project themselves into their texts to communicate their integrity, credibility, involvement, and a relationship to their subject matter and their readers. It therefore expresses a writer's socially define persona' (Hyland, 1999: 101).

We believe that in order to sound credible the author should project himself/herself in the discourse of the written text following the socio-cultural conventions of the community he/she is addressing. In this way, the writer will engage the reader in a type of virtual conversation where the realisation of his/her communicative goals will depend on the extent of the persuasive strategies applied in the text. These strategies should reveal his/her confidence in the evaluation and commitment of his/her statements. Roz Ivanic (1998, 1999) has researched the projection of self-hood in academic writing and has arrived at the conclusion that the writer's identity² is projected in the written text and that it is shaped by the values and beliefs of specific discourse communities on the one hand, and by social relations and communicative purposes of the particular genres they are dealing with, on the other.

The next parameter of the narrative model tends to answer what the writing is about. It involves the content, genre and register of writing. The writer is expected to manipulate the norms and conventions characteristic of that specific genre and use the register that suits his/her needs best so that the content is clear and accurate. Indeed, every genre is made up of certain requirements to be followed by the writer. One cannot compose a research proposal in the same way as one takes notes during a lecture.

Every piece of writing is reader-oriented, and, as a consequence, one of the writer's primary tasks is 'to satisfy the reader' (Thornton, 1980: 18). Consequently, writing becomes 'a joint endeavour between writers and readers, co-constructed through the active understanding of rhetorical situations and the likely responses of readers' (Hyland, 2009b: 31). Moreover, both the writer and the reader should approach the text with 'mutual co-awareness' of the other (Nystrand, 1986: 48), which will help to encode and, respectively, to decode the intended message correctly. And since the 'reciprocity principle' governs any act of communication, the process of writing becomes 'a matter of elaborating text in accord with what the writer can reasonably assume that the reader knows and expects, and the process of reading is a matter of

² In Ivanic's opinion there are three aspects of writer's identity:

1. The 'autobiographical self' is the 'self' which writers bring to an act of writing: their life-history, and sense of their roots. This 'self' is socially constructed by possibilities for self-hood which are available in the writer's life history.
2. The 'discoursal self' is the 'self' which writers construct through linguistic and other resources in an act of writing. The possibilities for self-hood inscribed in the discourses and genres on which writers draw have the potential to be ascribed to them, once they draw on these discourses and genres.
3. I have also distinguished a third 'self' which overlaps with these two: the 'self as author'. This self manifests itself in the degree of authoritativeness with which a writer writes. (Ivanic and Weldon, 1999: 169)

predicting text in accord with what the reader assumes about the writer's purpose' (Nystrand, 1989: 75).

As seen, reader awareness significantly influences the discourse of the written text. William Grabe and Robert B. Kaplan (1998) speak of five parameters that will impact the writer's choices:

1. the number of people who will read the text;
2. the degree of acquaintance with the potential reader(s);
3. the status of the reader(s);
4. the extent of shared background knowledge;
5. the extent of specific topical knowledge shared by the writer and the reader.

There are cases when one might not know exactly his/her audience, especially when texts are addressed to a plurality of readers. What the writer does, in this case, is to assume who the potential reader(s) might be and what discourse strategies he/she should apply to meet their expectations, 'writers and readers think of each other, imagine each other's purposes and strategies rightly or wrongly, and write or interpret the text in terms of these imaginations' (Myers, 1999: 40).

Reader awareness is closely interrelated with the purpose of the writing since it can be considered as an attempt to communicate with the reader. The purpose will reduce the options a writer has while encoding his/her intention and thus ensure successful communication. One way to convey the intended message appropriately is to follow the Grician maxims of quality, quantity, relevance and manner. Thus, in order to avoid communication failures the writer should encode his/her intention in a factual, brief, relevant and clear manner. Although these maxims can be flouted, the writer assumes that the reader will interpret them as such. This is why the figures of speech are not decoded as lies but are understood instead as 'deliberate floutings' (Cook, 2000: 31) of the quality maxim. As a rule, the maxims are flouted to produce a specific effect on the reader or to signal out the writer's attitude.

The writer's purpose is also related to the theory of speech acts proposed by John L. Austin (1962) and later on developed by John Searl (1969). Since 'all linguistic communication involves linguistic acts' (Searl, 1969: 16) it is worth considering the study of speech acts as revealing the writer's intention. Moreover, the virtual negotiation of meaning between the writer and the reader is done via the appropriate interpretation of the speech acts used in discourse.

Furthermore, the purpose is encoded in the conventions expressing status, situation, power and attitude, revealing the sociolinguistic principles that govern the discourse of the written text. Consequently, 'the participants orient their actions on certain standards which are taken for granted as rules of conduct by the social group to which they belong' (Nystrand, 1986: 48). All these factors considered make the unity of the written discourse, they foreground the mental representations, i.e. schemata, 'the conceptual frames that individuals use to organise their experience and get things done using language' (Hyland, 2009: 31).

So far we have tried to define the concept of purpose in writing, and hence find the answer to the question what for the person writes in Grabe and Kaplan's model. The researchers differentiate between the writer's factual purpose previously discussed and 'the concept of why people write' (Grabe and Kaplan, 1998: 211). The former refers to the relatively overt intentions a writer has while responding to a task in writing, whereas the latter relates to the covert intentions or motives. Vijay K. Bhatia (2004) introduces the concept of 'private intentions' within the context of socially accepted communicative purposes of particular genres. We can speak in terms of socially recognized purposes, which are relatively transparent in character, and private purposes, which underlie the covert intentions.

Thus, the concept of 'why' people write deals with the writer's indirect purposes not to communicate his/her ideas fully, which makes the decoding process more difficult for the reader(s). In this case one should examine the reasons that compel the writer to want to do so and how he/she intends to manipulate the reader to attend to the content.

Another parameter in the proposed ethnography of writing is related to the situation of communication, i.e. the physical context and time. The immediate environment is not as significant as it is in oral speech where success in communication depends on the context of 'here and now'. The reader, in written communication, might not even be aware of the exact time and place where the written discourse was produced as he/she interacts with the final product and not with the writer himself/herself. Moreover, the place and time of decoding might influence his/her understanding of what has been written. That is why, in this particular case of communication, both the writer and the reader can always turn back to the text and reconsider their previous ideas about it. On the one hand, the writer might produce many drafts till he/she thinks he/she has succeeded in conveying his intentions appropriately; on the other, the reader has the possibility to reread the text as many times as he/she thinks necessary to decode those intentions. In some types of writing, however, the knowledge of the exact time

and place is required for the decoding process, as for example, in the case of mails, so that the reader can make the appropriate inference in regard to the deictic expressions used in the text by the writer. It should also be noted here, that some generic constraints depend on the time and place of production, i.e. a 19th century letter will differ from one produced nowadays, or the linear way of writing in English might cause difficulty in understanding to a reader whose language is non-linear.

Finally, the last parameter in an ethnography of writing is attributed to the process of writing, and precisely to how it is done. As in the previous case, the channel via which the written discourse is communicated does not matter as much as it does in oral communication, though little research has been conducted in this particular area (Grabe and Kaplan, 1998: 213).

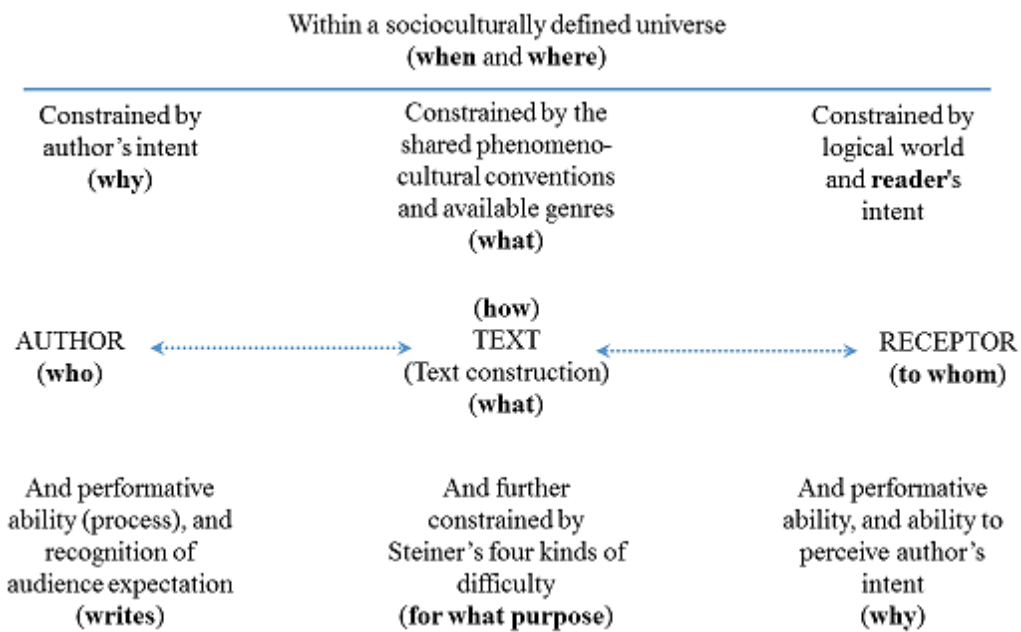
Yet, the matter of 'how' also involves the cognitive processes taking place in the mind that allow knowledge to be translated into writing. Scardamalia and Bereiter (1987) have claimed that the process involved in academic writing develops from a more general process of writing. In the authors' opinion, not all students can master it. The two basic models involved in composition are knowledge telling and knowledge transforming³. The ability to transform knowledge derives from the ability to tell knowledge, and, as a result, we can distinguish between mature and immature composing. A student mastering the ability to produce mature composing is able not only to tell knowledge but also to transform it. In mature composing knowledge is brought into the writing process after the writer has identified the problem and has considered the possible solutions. Such a process implies an elaboration of pre-writing notes where the goals and sub-goals are set, whereas the writer's primary focus is not on generating content but on considering goals, plans and problems.

Taking into account all these parameters, it is erroneous to consider writing as a non-reciprocal act of communication. The physical absence of the interlocutor does not imply the unidirectionality of the written discourse. Even if the writer might not be present in the process of reading, the receiver will give a certain feedback to the stated message, i.e. he/she might agree or disagree with it, or the very act of either continuing or refusing to read it also constitutes the receiver's feedback. Moreover, the fact that the author might be later on quoted in another piece of writing proves the interactive character of written communication. There

³ In the knowledge telling model, there is no need for the writer to monitor or plan coherence. Here coherence and well-formedness do not depend on deliberate or conscious application of the world knowledge. The writer's primary concern might be to find out what next thing to say, whereas coherence and well-formedness result from automatic processes. The knowledge transforming model retains the knowledge telling model as a subprocess, embedding it within a complex problem-solving process (Scardamalia and Bereiter, 1987).

are cases when the feedback is given immediately, e.g. in emails or synchronous chat, which makes easier to trace the interaction between the participants involved in the act of communication.

*Figure 1: Model of parameters involved in writing
(Grabe and Kaplan, 1998: 215)*



Grabe and Kaplan suggest a framework of the ethnography of writing highlighting its communicative orientation. Their model illustrates the constraints governing the writing process that both the writer and the reader should be aware of if they want to succeed in their communication. They are supposed to co-construct the intended message during their interaction with the written text.

We believe that the responsibility for successful communication lies mostly with the writer, as it depends on his/her ability to appropriately encode the message. That is why it becomes essential for the writer to acquire the necessary skills that will help him/her not only to tell knowledge but also to transform it, and, thus, make the communication more meaningful, and, in this way, engage the reader in a virtual discussion.

1.3. Writing in English for Academic Purposes Contexts

English for Academic Purposes (hereafter EAP) has been at the centre of researchers' attention for the last three decades (Silva, 1990; Hyland, 1999, 2002, 2006, 2009; Swales and Feak, 1994; Swales and Chang, 1999; Flowerdew and Peacock, 2001; Bailey, 2011; Bruce, 2011). The need for the emergence of EAP was partly due to the authors' desire to get their works known to a larger area of competent readers, whereas, writing in one's native language restricted the number of readers. As a result, English has become 'the leading language for the dissemination of academic knowledge' (Hyland and Hamp-Lyons, 2002: 1).

Similarly, the number of students involved in an EAP environment has increased and writing has become 'a key assessment tool, with students passing or failing courses according to the ways in which they respond to, and engage in, academic writing tasks' (Lillis, 2001: 20). Hence, the necessity of helping them to develop competence in academic writing in English arises. This competence substantially differs from writing in their native language. Even if the study skills they have acquired in their mother tongue could be transferred into English making the necessary adjustments, there would still be differences in the matter of style.

Generally EAP is viewed as the teaching of language needed in an academic environment, which will enable the students to study and conduct research in English (Jordan, 1997; Flowerdew and Peacock, 2001). Thus, students are helped to acquire the communication skills needed for academic purposes. Hyland and Hamp-Lyons suggest a more exhaustive definition of EAP. They emphasize the discipline oriented focus of EAP as well as the differences existing in various academic cultural contexts which also should be considered:

English for Academic Purposes refers to language research and instruction that focuses on the specific communicative needs and practices of particular groups in academic contexts. It means grounding instruction in an understanding of the cognitive, social and linguistic demands of specific academic disciplines. This takes practitioners beyond preparing learners for study in English to developing new kinds of literacy: equipping students with the communicative skills to participate in particular academic and cultural contexts. (Hyland and Hamp-Lyons, 2002: 2)

It, therefore, becomes the teacher's task to 'equip' the students with the necessary skills that will ensure their successful academic communication. The teacher is expected to provide proper and effective education so that students become academically literate, i.e. they become

able to respond appropriately to the cognitive, social and linguistic demands of a particular academic discipline. Consequently, EAP concerns how to first tell and then transform knowledge via English taking into account the socio-cultural particularities of the specific academic discipline.

As EAP evolved directly from English for Specific Purposes, Strevens (1988) is frequently quoted when it comes to delineating the characteristics of EAP. In the researcher's opinion, the teaching of EAP should be:

1. designed to meet specific needs of the learner; in this way, time would not be wasted;
2. related in its content to particular disciplines, occupations and activities, which will enhance learner's ability to be relevant;
3. centred on appropriate language in terms of lexis, syntax and discourse, which will enable the student to appropriately communicate within the academic community.

Flowerdew and Peacock (2001) completed the list with other factors characteristic of EAP, which:

- are concerned with authentic texts;
- take a communicative, task-based approach;
- involve custom-made materials;
- are aimed at adult learners;
- consist of purposeful courses.

Todd (2003) suggests that the teaching of EAP should not exclude the approaches used in EFL in general. Yet, he distinguishes six approaches on which EAP places greater emphasis than in other types of teaching English. In addition to Flowerdew and Peacock's use of authentic materials and tasks as a defining feature of EAP, the researcher claims that EAP also:

- focuses on inductive learning and not on deductive teacher-centred approaches (the use of concordancing, or reading focused on text analysis, or students acting as researchers investigating academic communities – all this seems to favour the inductive learning);
- applies process syllabuses involving task-based and project-based learning;
- promotes learner autonomy, which implies that the emphasis is on self-access learning, on the use of negotiated syllabuses, and on self and peer assessment and feedback;
- integrates technology in teaching;

- uses team teaching, where interdisciplinary contact between language and content specialists might lead to better results in EAP.

The approaches proposed aim at facilitating the process of the students' gradual projection into a particular academic community. Community membership 'offers a way of bringing writers, readers and texts together into a common rhetorical space, foregrounding the conceptual frames that individuals use to organize their experience and get things done using language' (Hyland, 2009a: 47). The first step in becoming a member of a community is to identify its characteristic features, the frames with which it constructs knowledge, and the role of the EAP teacher is to assist the student in this process.

The concept of community implies sharing common interests, goals among members of a specific social group. Thus, affiliation to a community involves more than just sharing similar linguistic rules. Swales (1990) defines the characteristic features of a discourse community emphasizing the common public goals shared by its members who use specific mechanism to facilitate the process of intercommunication. These mechanisms are used primarily to provide information and feedback. The scholar also points to the fact that a discourse community utilizes and hence possesses one or more genres in the communicative furtherance of its aims, which implies the previous acquisition of some specific lexis. At the same time, a discourse community has a threshold level of members with a suitable degree of relevant content and discorsal expertise.

The concept of discourse is central to the study of human communication. As it is well known, discourse is language in use (Shiffrin, 1994; Cook, 2000; Widdowson, 2007), i.e. meaningful and unified stretches of language considered in a particular context. The contextualized language ceases to be abstract as it carries the concrete meaning intentionally encoded by the addresser which should be appropriately decoded by the addressee. As discourse is context-bound, Joan Cutting (2002: 3) points to the existence of three types of contexts:

1. the situational context, i.e. the immediate physical context that surrounds the people involved in communication;
2. the background knowledge context, i.e. the shared knowledge about the world the participants possess;
3. the co-textual context, i.e. the surface text formed of formal links, which the participants are aware of.

As stated previously, the situational context appears not to impact significantly the process of written communication due to the fact that the participants belong, as a rule, to different physical environments. When it comes to the settings in the processes of encoding and, respectively, decoding, they might to a certain degree influence both processes. Yet, their importance is less substantial in the co-construction of the meaning of discourse as the participants have the opportunity to revise (re-write or re-read) the text several times before they realize their communicative goals.

The background knowledge context awareness seems to be of major relevance in the creation of appropriate discourses for a specific community. The writer should be familiar not only with the rhetorical constraints necessary for the formal encoding of the message (i.e. the co-textual context) but also with the mental representations shared by the members of the community. These representations, or schemata⁴, will help the author and the reader to co-construct the discourse of the written text as the information will be structured following a particular frame which is characteristic for that specific community.

It should be noted that the process of writing is based on the knowledge the author assumes the reader shares with him/her about other existent texts, which are related to their discipline. Thus, there is a continuum network of dialogical relations that participants of the written communication should be aware of. Dialogism is a term associated with Bakhtin's work, who maintained that any specific utterance is a contribution to a continuing human dialogue - that is, it is both a response to past uses of the language and an occasion for future uses. The Russian theorist was the first to emphasize that human life itself is dialogic in its essence:

To live means to participate in dialogue: to ask questions, to heed, to respond, to agree, and so forth. In this dialogue a person participates wholly and throughout his whole life: with his eyes, lips, hands, soul, spirit, with his whole body and deeds. He invests his entire self in discourse, and this discourse enters into the dialogic fabric of human life, into the world symposium (Bakhtin, 1999: 293).

Thus, discourses created to satisfy the needs of an academic community will be based on the knowledge of previous texts in this area, on the one hand, and will be directed towards future interpretations, on the other. They will enter 'the dialogic fabric' of the academic community who shares similar mental representations of the discourse specific knowledge. Otto Kruse states:

⁴ Cook defines schemata as mental representations of typical situations, which are used in discourse processing to predict the contents of the particular situation which the discourse describes. (Cook, 2000: 69)

‘Academic texts can be understood only as part of a co-operative effort of a scientific community to gain knowledge. Each text refers to former knowledge and points towards the knowledge that will be produced in the future’ (Kruse, 2003: 24).

The shared background knowledge will help the author in the process of writing to predict the reader’s possible expectations. Therefore, the process of academic communication implies the activation of knowledge schemata highlighted by the topic of concrete discourses. This will allow the writer to be relevant, clear, brief, and true in his/her discourse, assuming that the reader will activate the corresponding schemata in the process of decoding.

1.4 Towards a Model of Academic Writing as Communicative Language Use

The production of the discourse of the written text implies more than language usage, it involves ‘complex mental processes’ (Wright, 1999: 86), as well as ‘three interlocking dimensions: (1) the written text in itself, (2) the social interaction which surrounds the production of the text and (3) the socio-cultural context within which this social interaction takes place’ (Ivanic, Weldon, 1999: 168), hence the need to train the student writers as ‘discourse analysts’ (Bruce, 2011: 124).

Recent studies in discourse analysis have provided valuable insights into the complexity of language use (Coulthard, 1985; Shiffrin; 1994; Cook, 2000; Cutting, 2002; Widdowson, 2007; Paltridge, 2008). The studies highlight the importance of communicative competence as enabling the participants ‘to convey and interpret messages and to negotiate meanings interpersonally within specific context’ (Brown, 2000: 246). Thus, one of the major goals in EAP is to help the students to develop communicative competence.

The concept of competence was introduced by the structural linguist Noam Chomsky. Yet, he focused exclusively on ‘linguistic competence’ which implied that both the speaker and the listener have perfect linguistic knowledge ‘unaffected by cognitive and situational factors during actual linguistic performance’ (Rickheit and Strohner, 2008: 17). In generative grammar, the term “competence” is referred to as

the implicit system of rules that constitutes a person’s knowledge of a language. This includes a person’s ability to create and understand sentences, including sentences they have never heard before, knowledge of what are and what are not sentences of a particular

language, and the ability to recognize ambiguous and deviant sentences (Richards & Schmidt, 2002: 93 – 94).

However, this idealized approach did not suit the real-life communicative situation where perfect grammar rules are flouted, whereas the speakers' communication is still unified and meaningful. Larsen-Freeman points out: 'communication is a process; knowledge of the forms of the language is insufficient' (Larsen-Freeman, 2008: 128). Effective communication requires that the interlocutors agree both on the referential meaning of words and on the social, cultural and pragmatic import of values attached to the chosen words.

Later, the sociolinguist Hymes introduced the concept of communicative competence, referring to it as 'social rules of language use' (Paulston 1992: 37). It is an interpersonal construct that can be examined in real-life situations where two or more individuals are involved in the process of communication. The scholar pays special attention to the cultural factors affecting communication:

...the goal of a broad theory of communication can be said to be to show the ways in which the systematically possible, the feasible, and the appropriate are linked to produce and interpret actually occurring cultural behavior (Hymes, 1972: 286).

Such a perspective on human communication has made the researchers in second language teaching reconsider the previous pedagogical framework and shift towards a communicative approach in language education. Consequently, communicative competence was defined as consisting of at least four components (Canale and Swain, 1980; Michael Canale, 1983; Celce-Murcia, Dornyei, and Thurrell, 1995):

1. Grammatical or linguistic competence, which is close to Noam Chomsky's definition of linguistic competence and which deals with the formal links used in the process of communication. It namely includes knowledge of lexical items and rules of morphology, syntax, semantics, and phonology.
2. Sociolinguistic competence, which consists of the social and cultural knowledge affecting the communication process. It enables the student to communicate appropriately, and thus make his/her intention clear.
3. Discourse competence, which implies the ability to combine language structures into different types of cohesive and coherent texts (e.g. formal letter, political speech, poetry, academic essay, cooking recipe).
4. Strategic competence, which involves the knowledge of both linguistic and extralinguistic communication strategies which enhance the efficiency of

communication and, where necessary, enable the learner to overcome difficulties when communication breakdowns occur.

Thus, communicative competence involves not only grammatical accuracy but also extralinguistic, socio-cultural features. EAP students are expected to develop this competence, while the teacher should design a language teaching method ‘with a face toward communicative conduct and social life’ (Paulston 1992: 40).

Academic writing should thus be considered within the framework of the communicative approach, whereas, helping students to develop academic writing competence should become a priority.

Central to the language needs of EAP students is competence in academic writing, because of the importance placed on written assessments in academic courses at all levels. Competence in academic writing also relates to the future needs of graduates to communicate within professional or academic communities through written publications (Bruce, 2011: 118).

Discourse competence in academic writing should be viewed as being essential in the hierarchy of communicative competence. Ian Bruce argues that ‘discourse competence is more than textual competence, as it involves socially constructed knowledge, general rhetorical knowledge and linguistic knowledge; also, to intermesh these knowledge areas within discourse, it requires more abstract procedural or organisational knowledge’ (Bruce, 2011: 124).

Bhatia (2004) introduces the notion of discursive competence as a general concept which involves various levels of competence needed ‘in order to expertly operate within well-defined professional as well as general socio-cultural contexts’ (Bhatia, 2004: 144). In the researcher’s opinion, discursive competence should include:

- Textual competence, which implies the ability to use not only the linguistic code, but also the ability to use textual, contextual and pragmatic knowledge to produce and interpret contextually appropriate texts.
- Generic competence is seen as an important contributor to professional expertise, and is often embedded in specific disciplinary cultures. It means the ability to identify, construct, interpret and successfully exploit a specific repertoire of professional, disciplinary or workplace genres.

- Social competence, which incorporates an ability to use language more widely to participate effectively in a variety of social and institutional contexts to give expression to one's social identity, which is constrained by social structures and social processes.

Vijay K. Bhatia argues that 'success of any instance of communication, to a large extent, depends on the shared conventional knowledge of the genre to which the specific instance belongs' (Bhatia, 1999: 37). Thus, generic categorization of the written text is crucial for its interpretation as it will display the regularities of discourse organisation. Thus, for example, 'much of academic writing is an individual's response to somewhat predictable rhetorical contexts, often meant to serve a given act of communicative purposes, for a specified readership' (Bhatia, 1999: 22).

The predictability of academic writing results from the expectations the members of an academic community have. They are expected to share common background knowledge as to the micro and macro structure of discourse, on the one hand, and the socio-cultural conventions that will govern this particular act of communication, on the other.

Swales and Feak (1994) consider the below parameters involved in academic writing process.

Figure 2: Considerations in academic writing



As seen, the audience is to be considered first in academic writing, which, after all, appears to be an interaction taking place between the student writer and his/her audience. While writing the student 'is responding to a demand', and he/she 'is literate enough to switch into the written mode to make that response' (Thornton, 1980: 30). Thus, the writer needs to respond to a

particular task that involves the production of a written text. Moreover, his/her needs should coincide with the needs of the reader. In such a way communication becomes possible and ‘results in stability and predictability of interpretation’ (Myers, 1999: 45). In academic writing, the student is expected to produce coherent and cohesive texts related, as a rule, to discipline specific areas (they might be assigned to write reports, essays, projects focusing on a particular subject). Swales and Feak suggest that ‘to be successful in your writing task, you need to have an understanding of your audience’s expectations and prior knowledge, because these will affect the content of your writing’ (Swales and Feak, 1994: 7).

We would like to emphasize that, generally, the audience the student considers before and while writing consists solely of the teacher. First, the student responds to a task in written form which has been assigned by the teacher. Second, it is on his/her expertise that the student is relying most of all. Thus, his/her primary goal is to satisfy this particular reader, who at the end has the authority to evaluate the paper. In our opinion, academic writing should involve a larger audience, including peer interaction. In this way, writing itself might be more motivational as it would not be regarded as a must but as a means of expressing and sharing one’s viewpoints in an academic context. Hyland considers that ‘audience is, in fact, rarely a concrete reality, particularly in academic and professional contexts, and must be seen as essentially representing a construction of the writer which may shift during the composing process’ (Hyland, 2009b: 32).

The purpose in academic writing should be clearly stated. One of the expectations the reader has is to understand from the very beginning what the discourse of the written text is dealing with. If the writer’s intentions are not clearly stated, communication will be a failure, and ‘stability and predictability of interpretation’ impossible. Moreover, in the academic environment where the student is expected to respond to a demand in writing, his/her purpose will mirror that demand in his/her writing. Thus, the purpose and the audience are closely interrelated, as the latter will impact the former. Generally speaking, the overall purpose of a student is to ‘display familiarity, expertise, and intelligence’ (Swales and Feak, 1994: 7) in the subject matter he/she is examining.

Baily (Baily, 2011: 3) distinguishes four most common reasons for academic writing:

- to report on a piece of research the writer has conducted;
- to answer a question the writer has been given or chosen;
- to discuss a subject of common interest and give the writer’s view;

- to synthesise research done by others on a topic.

Organisation in academic writing involves a set format of information structure. Thus, the student should be familiar with the macro-structure of the particular type of discourse he/she is writing. For instance, Swales and Feak have shown how ideally information should be structured in research report/article (Swales and Feak, 1994: 157).

Thus, the introduction is the leading in element to what the paper is going to deal with. The writer proceeds then from more general to more specific information. This gradual transition prepares the reader to what will follow in the article, it helps him/her acknowledge the membership with the author, and it arouses his /her interest. Here the writer provides a literature review accepting or rejecting the existing theories and, in doing so, he/she brings forth solid arguments. Next the writer focuses on the methods used in his/her research. He/she justifies his/her choice. Then the writer describes and analyses the results of the research. As seen these two parts, i.e. the methods and results, quantitatively occupy most of the article/report. They are extremely significant as they allow the writer to prove his/her hypothesis stated in the introduction. The paper ends with the discussion of the results leading the reader out; this time the writer will proceed from more specific to more general issues. It is also worth mentioning here what further research could be conducted in the future (see Appendix 1).

When it comes to the style of academic writing, the writer is expected to show competence in managing the rhetorical and stylistic conventions imposed by the discourse type. Thus, ‘the style of a particular piece must not only be consistent, but must also be proper for the message being conveyed and for the audience’ (Swales and Feak, 1994: 15). It is generally expected that the student writer adopt a formal style in academic writing. Informality might sound inappropriate in an academic community. The writer hence should shift the vocabulary from an informal style (which might sound too simplistic and inappropriate) to a formal style (which will make the discourse of his/her paper efficient).

Flow in academic writing ensures the smooth transition from one statement to another. Hence, paragraph composition becomes another important issue to be considered while writing for academic purposes. The paragraph in itself is a thought unit that should reveal how the idea stated in the topic statement is exposed. It should be internally coherent, and at the same time it should be linked to the next paragraphs in the text. As a rule, a paragraph consists of:

- topic statement (TS) –
 - states the main idea;

- usually at the beginning of the paragraph;
- supporting sentences (SS) –
 - explain / develop the TS;
 - every sentence relates to the TS
- a concluding sentences (CS) –
 - summarizes the SS;
 - states a conclusion about TS;
 - not needed in some paragraphs.

A good writer should achieve paragraph unity, i.e. all of the supporting sentences relate to the topic statement. Thus, the paragraph is a mini research in itself as there is the leading in element (TS), the body (SS), and the leading out part (CS). The sentences within the paragraph should be cohesive, i.e. formally connected with each other. The writer should connect the components of the surface text (e.g. the actual words we hear or see) within a sequence. In doing so, he/she should follow the grammar conventions, lexical conventions and the rhetorical conventions of the particular language in which he/she is writing the research paper.

Yet, as stated, cohesion is not enough. The paragraph should also be coherent. Coherence represents ways in which the components of the textual world, i.e. the configuration of concepts and relations which underlie the surface text, are mutually accessible and relevant. Thus the writer should employ several hedging elements, signposts that can help him/her achieve coherence in his/her writing.

Presentation is the last parameter presented in Figure 2. It basically relates to the proofreading stage where the student writer is expected to check the grammar, spelling, punctuation, syntax. In Swales and Feak's opinion, 'most instructors tolerate small errors in language papers written by nonnative speakers – for example, mistakes in article or preposition usage' (Swales and Feak, 1994: 29). However, the researchers point to the inadmissibility of more serious mistakes that are considered less acceptable.

Thus, academic writing is aimed at a particular readership, having a well-defined purpose to respond to a certain demand. The process is constrained by the particular rhetorical and stylistic conventions that determine the information structure of the academic text. Yet, what the student is expected to do is to transform the knowledge and thus contribute to existing knowledge with his/her insights. It becomes essential to help the student to develop the

necessary competences in order that he/she produces efficient and appropriate discourses for the academic community he/she belongs to.

The complexity of the academic writing process may cause anxiety in the writer. It thus becomes important for the writer to overcome the stress. The more proficient and knowledgeable in his/her field of study the writer is, the more confident he/she becomes. At the same time, the writer should be aware of the existing conventions shared by the academic community. He/she should know how to organise the text by following the grammar rules, by selecting the appropriate words, and by constructing coherent paragraphs.

Kruse (2003) points to the main three challenges a beginner writer has. The first deals with the demands of knowledge, i.e. the student does not know what exactly he/she is expected to say. He/she might find it difficult to integrate his/her knowledge in the already existing framework of academic knowledge. In addition, he/she should realize that their purpose is not merely to tell knowledge but also to transform it.

The second challenge is the demands of language. The student should be aware of the particularity of the academic language and apply it appropriately in his/her writing. Consequently, the student should be aware of such notions as: paragraph unity, TS, cohesion and coherence, formal style.

The third challenge relates to the demands of communication. The student should be helped to develop reader awareness throughout the process of writing. He/she should imagine the expectations the readers might have and satisfy them.

Bruce (2011) proposes three stages in the development of academic writers, where one stage derives from the other:

- developing knowledge frameworks in order to be able to deconstruct and reconstruct discourses of the discipline that writers aim to enter (relating to the elements of ‘discourse competence’)
- developing an authorial ‘voice’ and an ‘identity’ within the target discourse community (relating to the elements of ‘discourse competence’)
- developing a critical competence to innovate, challenge, resist and reshape the discourse of their academic discourse community (Bruce, 2011: 122).

These stages reveal what should be developed with the students so that they become academic writers within a particular discourse community. Moreover, the author emphasizes

the fact that it is possible to develop only the first stage within the classroom, the other two stages are expected to be developed gradually in the process of academic growth. This highlights the importance of autonomous learning in EAP contexts. Once, the writer aspires to improving his/her writing skills, he/she becomes motivated from within. Thus, the teacher's role is to facilitate the process of developing competence in academic writing. He/she should help the students to develop knowledge frameworks and decrease the anxiety threshold so that the students become confident and competent writers.

Chapter 2 :

Pedagogical Approaches to Teaching Writing Skills in EAP

As seen, good mastery of academic writing skills is crucial for students who want to succeed in their academic discourse community. However, the process of acquisition itself is intricate because, in general, ‘learning to write fluently and expressively is the most difficult of the macroskills for all language users, regardless of whether the language in question is a first, second or foreign language’ (Nunan, 2005: 35).

Indeed, writing is not a natural activity the way speaking is for native speakers of a particular language. People learn to speak from infancy provided they belong to the specific socio-cultural community using that language as a means of communication, and do not have mental disorders or physical disabilities. However, writing is something they are taught to do after they have acquired and developed the speaking skills. In addition, writing involves the practice and knowledge of the other two macroskills, such as listening, and reading. Hence the need for viable approaches to help students to acquire this skill has resulted in the emergence of certain theories of how to teach writing.

The process of learning to write in a foreign language becomes even more complex when it comes to academically bound non-native speakers, as ‘NS [native speaker] writers have highly developed (native) language proficiency in English, whereas most NNSs [non-native speakers] must dedicate years to learning it as a second language – in most cases as adults’ (Hinkel, 2004: 6). Hinkel (2004) suggests four main assumptions concerning the way in which learning to write in a second language differs from learning to write in the first language.

1. Unlike learning to write in an L1, learning to write in an L2 first requires an attainment of sufficient L2 linguistic proficiency;
2. Writing pedagogy for NSs with highly developed (native) language proficiency, which NNSs (by definition) do not have, is not readily applicable to L2 writing instruction;
3. Writing personal narratives/opinions (“telling” what one already knows) is not similar to producing academic writing, which requires obtaining and transforming knowledge;
4. Intensive and consistent instruction in L2 vocabulary and grammar, as well as discourse organization, is paramount for academically bound NNSs.

The above list of difficulties non-native speakers face is not exhaustive. The author does not consider another crucial factor interfering in the process of writing, i.e. the impact the native language might have while writing in a foreign language. Thus, non-native beginner writers have a tendency to transfer the discursive patterns and rhetoric conventions characteristic of their own language and culture onto English. That is why 'it is the responsibility of the writing teacher to help novice writers develop into experienced writers' (Celce-Murcia and Olshtain, 2000: 141).

The main approaches to teaching writing discussed in this sub-chapter take into consideration the most common difficulties students might encounter in the process of writing. The difference existing among them consists in the way the written text is viewed. Thus, the product approach examines writing by considering the final product itself. The process approach seeks to understand the processes involved in the production of the final text. Whereas, the genre-based approach argues for the necessity of understanding the text as a socio-cultural construct characteristic of a specific linguistic community. At the same time, the implications revealed by the studies in contrastive rhetoric should be considered especially when dealing with teaching writing to non-native speakers.

Due to the fact that academic writing is an individual response to a concrete task, teachers should be aware of the different strategies and techniques students apply in the process. As they can differ from one student to another, teachers should find the optimal way to help the students gradually develop their writing competence. Celce-Murcia and Olshtain argue that, in a way, it is erroneous to speak about teaching writing; in the researchers' opinion it is more about 'creating the best context and the most suitable conditions to encourage a person to write, particularly in a second language' (Celce-Murcia and Olshtain, 2000: 142).

The students' writing preferences as well as their needs, their level of proficiency, and their particular learning styles are some of the key factors to be considered before elaborating a writing curriculum. If teachers are aware of their students' individual differences, they can help them to develop and improve their writing skills. Therefore, teachers should not look for a particular approach to be used exclusively for the writing assignments. It would be better to adjust different strategies and techniques from various approaches to help the students become competent writers.

2.1 Contrastive Rhetoric and its Implications to Teaching Writing

Being aware of the fact that ‘different languages provide different resources for organizing text’ (Kaplan, 1997: 27), Kaplan established in the 60s the principles of contrastive rhetoric. Generally, contrastive rhetoric is viewed as ‘an area of research in second language acquisition that identifies problems in composition encountered by second language writers and, by referring to the rhetorical strategies of the first language, attempts to identify them’ (Connor, 1996: 5).

Although contrastive rhetoric has been criticized by some researchers as having negative pedagogical consequences in the classroom (Kubota, 1999, 2001; Spack, 1997; Zamel, 1997), Connor (2008) argues that there is a need for the reconceptualization of the term. In the scholar’s opinion, contrastive rhetoric includes more than a mere process of comparing and contrasting the influence of the mother tongue linguistic practices in a foreign language. The scholar points to the three main directions to be considered while defining the modern framework of contrastive rhetoric. Thus, writing should be studied within the social and cultural contexts it occurs. It should also be viewed as a result of the writers’ intercultural interaction taking place in today’s instant and global message making environment. That is why, the scholar proposes a change of name from contrastive rhetoric to intercultural rhetoric.

In her research, Petric (2005) revealed the benefits of contrastive rhetoric applied to the writing pedagogy. The researcher compared the Russian and English culturally specific textual patterns in a writing class in order to help Russian students to become more fluent in the production of written texts in English. The conclusion was that there is no universal rule to answer all the needs as writing is not only a socio-cultural construct but also an individual response to a particular task. That is why the findings from contrastive rhetoric should be adjusted to a given teaching situation, and they might vary from a class to another.

Contrastive rhetoric aims to show the relationship between culture and rhetoric. Belcher believes that intercultural rhetoric should still be considered while helping multilingual learners ‘what we can expect instead from IR research is that it will continue to complicate, problematize and enrich our understanding of what community membership means for and to writers (and readers), not just with respect to the communities they are born into, but those they choose to join or hope to change or decide to create’ (Belcher, 2014: 66).

Thus, contrastive rhetoric can help in understanding the way mother tongue patterns are transposed in a foreign language. Being aware of this, the writing class teacher might prevent students from making mistakes while writing in that language. It appears that such knowledge could be effective especially at the beginning when mother tongue interferences might hamper the proper understanding of the specific mechanisms involved in writing in a foreign language. The teacher should consider integrating contrastive rhetoric principles with the other approach he/she thinks will enhance the students' writing most.

2.2 Product Approach to Writing

Another way of approaching writing is to focus exclusively on its end result, i.e. the written text itself. Thus, it is not the process involved while writing that is to be considered but the product, which is expected to reflect the learner's ability to use the language accurately. Such an approach generally involves activities that will engage the learner in 'imitating, copying and transforming models of correct language' (Nunan, 1991: 87).

The limitation of the product approach, also known as 'current-traditional rhetoric' (Matsuda, 2003: 67), is that it does not go beyond the sentence level. It implies that special emphasis is put on accuracy. It is the organization of ideas that becomes more important than ideas themselves. Yet, good mastery of structural knowledge does not necessarily imply the ability of creating above all a coherently structured text. In this respect, Nunan suggests that while the product approach 'fitted in well with the sentence-level view of structuralist linguistics, and the bottom-up approach to language processing and production, it did not marry so happily with more contemporary views of language and learning which concentrated more on language at the level of discourse' (Nunan, 1991: 87).

Such an approach favours accuracy over fluency. Its primary focus is on the mechanical aspect of language, i.e. its structural organisation. It is a rather teacher-centred approach where students are not participants of the learning process but subjects who are expected to follow a definite set of instructions in order to produce a specific text. The process itself of writing does not count. What counts is to make sure that the final product resembles the model the students were supposed to imitate.

The product approach does not favour creative thinking and does not involve such a complex process as problem-solving since the students are expected to imitate a given model.

It implies that product approach concerns the knowledge telling model, which does not deal with coherence in Scardamalia and Bereiter's opinion (1987). It becomes difficult to define the actual communicative purpose of such a text, as it does not communicate the students' ideas, but imitates the original model. As a result, writing can be viewed as a mechanical drill.

The product approach closely follows the so-called classical approach, i.e. the grammar-translation method. Just like in the case of grammar-translation method, the focus is on the final product, on its structure and accuracy. Usually such a work is intended to address solely one reader, i.e. the teacher. Thus, such a type of communication can lack interactivity. Moreover, students are not even encouraged to discuss their work among themselves.

It is true that the students communicate their knowledge on the assigned topic. Yet, the primary focus is on how grammatically and structurally accurate they were while fulfilling the task. They are aware of certain rigours and they are supposed to frame their writing within the concrete model they were given as an example. Yet, it does not appear that in doing so the students reveal their own voice, their identity in the work.

Although product approach has been heavily criticized, it should be noted that it is still preferred in teaching writing in many parts of the world. It has become part of the academic curriculum, some universities giving preference to controlled writing activities and techniques. Hyland reveals that 'in many schools students are asked to write simply to demonstrate their knowledge of decontextualised facts with little awareness of a reader beyond the teacher-examiner' (Hyland, 2009b: 9).

However, one should not underrate the advantages of this approach, particularly when referring to academic writing. It appears that students feel more confident as writers if they have a model to follow. This is particularly important with beginner students. As learning to write in a foreign language implies distancing oneself from the way of writing in one's mother tongue, the students might find it easier at first to imitate the already existing texts. Thus, they will tell the knowledge following a given model. This approach, if used for the beginners' level, might help students to become more confident so that later on they could distance themselves from the given model and gradually project their own voice in their writing. Yet, students should be constantly encouraged not to focus exclusively on the formal features of a text.

In her research, Frydrychova Klimova (2014) reveals that the group of students who was taught to write using the product approach has got slightly better results than the one who was taught to write using the process approach. Yet, the researcher argues that the result was

determined by the students' degree of language proficiency. As the students in the first group were more fluent in English than those in the second group, Frydrychova Klimova thinks that this determined the final result. Thus, in her opinion, the acquisition of writing skills depends rather on language proficiency than on the teaching approach.

However, the cause might be in the fact that the students felt more confident while having a concrete model in front of them. These were distant students who, as it seems, had not had a course in academic writing before; therefore, imitating the given sample appears to be easier than brainstorming, drafting, redrafting, and proofreading.

As seen, contrastive rhetoric and product approach share at least one feature in common, i.e. they primarily focus on structure. In the first case, students are helped to acquire the particular patterning of the foreign language as contrasted to the one of their mother tongue; whereas, in the second case they are supposed to imitate the given structure of a particular text.

2.3 Process Approach to Writing

The process approach appeared as a reaction to the product approach, which was believed not to develop students' writing skills to the fullest. Some researchers (Zamel, 1976; Taylor, 1981; Silva, 1990) considered that the product approach did not contribute to facilitating the projection of the students' voice in their writing, and thus discouraging creative thinking. In this respect, Tylor suggests that 'writing is not the straightforward plan – outline – write process that many believe it to be' (Taylor, 1981: 5-6).

Clark (2012) states that it is of utmost importance to make students aware of the fact that writing involves a complex process. It thus become the teacher's task to provide the most suitable context that will contribute to the development of a process that best suits the students' needs. The researcher is convinced that 'the term "process" is of key importance for anyone entering the field of composition, both as a teacher and as a researcher' (Clark, 2012: 2).

The process approach shifts from a teacher-centred to a student-centred pedagogy. The process pedagogy advocates 'the importance of teaching writing not as product but as process: of helping students discover their own voice; of recognizing that students have something important to say; of allowing students to choose their own topic; of providing teacher and peer

feedback; of encouraging revision; and of using student writing as the primary text of the course' (Matsuda, 2003: 67).

Writing has come to be viewed as an intricate, recursive, and creative process where the students are expected to reveal their own voice. They should not strictly follow specific rules, nor imitate a given model. Instead, they are supposed to focus on the ideas they want to express and reshape them as many times as they think appropriate for their communicative purposes. The teacher and the students become collaborators in this process, making the process itself more interactive. Moreover, students are encouraged to collaborate among themselves, which becomes 'a way of enhancing motivation and developing positive attitudes towards writing' (Nunan, 1991: 87).

That is why the process approach was thought to best create the necessary context that will help students to improve their writing skills. Applebee states that 'properly implemented process approaches are more effective in fostering good writing and breadth of form, and also encouraging more reasoned and disciplined thinking about the topics themselves' (Applebee, 1986: 97). Moreover, researchers came to the conclusion that this approach was optimal for both native and foreign speakers. Thus, for example, Zamel states that 'ESL writers who are ready to compose and express their ideas use strategies similar to those of native speakers of English' (Zamel, 1982: 203). In the researcher's opinion 'research into second language composing processes seems to corroborate much of what we have learnt from research in the first language writing' (Zamel, 1984: 198).

The benefits of such an approach is that it considers writing as a cognitive process involving problem-solving. Thus, while responding to a writing task the students look for the optimal intellectual ways in which to do it. They will involve cognition to solve the problem, i.e. they will involve the mental processes which will help them to do their written assignment successfully.

Flower and Hayes (1981) suggested a model revealing that the students' performance was determined by their long term memory as well as by the given task. The writers will use the cognitive processes from their long-term memory in the process of responding to the assigned topic. The researchers argue that in the process of writing, students determine the rhetorical situation (where they consider the topic, the audience, and the exigency), plan extensively by continuously setting goals, and monitor their own performance. They also point to the non-

linearity of the process itself. Planning, drafting, revising, and editing are viewed as recursive, sometimes even happening more or less simultaneously.

The question that arises is to what extent the process approach is fitted in the context of academic writing. In this respect, Lonka argues that 'it is obvious that process-oriented instruction may be helpful in academic writing, because it lowers the threshold for writing and enhances automaticity, provides social support and regimen, and helps the writers to revise their cognitions and beliefs about writing' (Lonka, 2003: 118). The scholar based her assumption on the research she conducted on 11 medical students writing their PhD dissertations, who volunteered to take a process writing course. The findings suggest that the process approach offered the best context to help the students improve their academic writing.

Yet, the students involved in the experiment were far from novice writers as at this stage they were expected to have already produced at least two significant graduation papers (one at the end of their first cycle of study, and one at the second). This implies that they felt more confident while writing for academic purposes.

Another important factor to be taken into consideration is the fact that they were supposed to be familiar with the rigours of their particular field (as a result of both extensive reading and writing). Thus, they were able not only to tell the knowledge but also to transform it. Silva (1993), for example, mentions that there is a difference in composing between skilled and novice writers, where the former are more fluent in producing effective and accurate texts than the latter.

Similarly, the particularities of academic writing should be taken into consideration. It appears that the process approach is best suited when writing is considered exclusively as a form of personal expression. As a consequence, the writers focus on revealing their ideas, and involve themselves in an act of self-discovery. They could determine what the best strategies are in order to produce a coherent piece of writing. Whereas, academic writing, is above all a contextualized type of writing where the author's voice is as important as the social aspect of this particular genre.

Hyland (2009b) states that there are undeniable benefits of the process approach to teaching writing. However, the researcher reveals the shortcomings of this approach as well. Apart from failing taking into consideration the social aspect of writing, he also mentions the overemphasized attention to psychological factors. In addition, the varied conventions of professional and academic communities are downplayed. In the researcher's opinion there is

no concrete evidence that process approach greatly improves student writing. He argues that process approach ‘fails to consider the forces outside the individual which help guide problem-definition, frame solutions and ultimately shape writing’ (Hyland, 2009b: 26).

2.3.1 Post-Process Approach to Writing

Once the shortcomings have been identified, the researchers (Kent, 1999; Olson, 2002; Reiff, 2002; Atkinson, 2003a, 2003b) have begun to approach writing as situated in a particular socio-cultural context. As a result, the awareness that writing contains more than just determining the cognitive processes involved in the activity of writing has appeared. The focus, thus, has shifted from teaching the same general stages of writing to considering writing as a communicative act determined by the socio-cultural factors within which it is produced.

The name of this approach to writing should not be considered as something coming ‘after’ but rather as something going ‘beyond’ the process approach. The researchers’ goal is not to suggest a paradigm shift, they are rather interested in ‘expanding and broadening the domain of L2 writing – in research as much as in teaching’ (Atkinson, 2003: 11). Therefore, post-process has been defined as ‘the rejection of the dominance of process at the expense of other aspects of writing and writing instruction’ (Matsuda, 2003: 78 – 79), pointing to its heuristic purpose, and moving ‘toward the era of multiplicity’ (Matsuda, 2003: 79).

By situating writing in a particular socio-cultural context, the researcher is interested in delineating what other factors besides those expressive, cognitive, and linguistic influence the process of writing. As writing appears to be socially, culturally, and politically bound, it is erroneous to speak in terms of a mainstream approach that could be applied to every student all over the world. It seems that what fits the process of writing in a western context, might not work in non-western contexts (Casanave, 2003). Similarly, it appears that even within the same institution the process might be hampered by the students’ socio-cultural background.

Hyland (2009b) points to the advantages the interest in researching writing in a particular context have brought in elaborating a more or less detailed description of the factors involved in the process of writing. However, the researcher mentions that it cannot be comprehensive as it is impossible to consider absolutely all the factors governing the particular act of writing.

Casanave (2003) is also rather cautious while using the term ‘post-process.’ The researcher considers writing as a socio-political artefact involving evaluation, systems of genres, knowledge and identity constructs. She acknowledges the importance of investigating L2 writing in more socio-politically-oriented ways. The best way in doing so is in qualitatively analysing case studies. However, the researcher points to the fact that, up till now, the process of writing has not been considered as isolated from the social, political, and ideological purposes that language serves. That is why she admits feeling rather uncomfortable giving the label ‘post-process’ to the changes that have happened. Instead, she suggests continuing the research in the field where the priorities ‘should be the issue of the inherent tension in L2 writing research between the pragmatic focus on language and rhetorical forms on the one hand and attention to the less text-based aspects of L2 writing, such as ways that L2 writing, like all writing, is situated in social, political, and cultural contexts’ (Casanave, 2003: 98).

One of the benefits of the post-process approach is that writing is viewed as socio-culturally bound. Thus, it implies that it is governed by the socio-cultural constraints the writers belong to. Defining them allows teachers to help students respond more accurately to the written task. This approach also reveals the interactive side of the written communication, which is not viewed as a monologic act, but rather as a dialogic act involving a specific community.

In her article ‘Post-Process “Pedagogy”: A Philosophical Exercise’, Kastman Breuch (2002) speaks in favour of the post-process approach. Moreover, she claims that the post-process approach should be separated from the process approach which, in her opinion, is too prescriptive and not meeting the actual writers’ needs. She believes that the process approach perceives writing as a body of knowledge and not as an activity, and the methods of teaching as exercises of mastery, while they should be indeterminate activities. The researcher highlights the dialogic essence of the writing process, stating that writing is public, interpretative and situated. However, she admits that concrete pedagogical agendas based on content are not formulated in the post-process theory; her belief is that teachers should be guided instead by the pedagogical principles, i.e. they should become more aware of the students’ needs and enter in a continuous dialogue with them.

Hashemnezhad and Hashemnezhad (2012) conducted a comparative study of product, process, and post-process approaches, which were used in the writing classroom to help Iranian EFL students improve their writing skills. The students were divided into three homogeneous groups, and a different approach was applied to each group. The results show that the groups

where the process and post-process approaches were used have better results than the group where the product approach was used. However, there is no difference in the results between the groups where process and post-process approaches were applied. This might lead to the conclusion that the post-process approach cannot be considered as more significant than the process approach in this particular case.

By means of conclusion, it might be said that the post-process approach situates the writing activity in a particular context. Although it seems to consider the reader's presence as well, this approach remains writer-centred. It considers more the writers' needs, much attention being devoted to the ways the writers understand what is expected from them by means of an on-going dialogue.

2.4 Genre-Based Approach to Writing

Another way of approaching writing is to view it as a social construct determined by 'the forces outside the individual which help guide purposes, establish relationships, and ultimately shape writing' (Hyland, 2003: 18). Taking into account that language is used to fulfil specific purposes, the genre-based approach aims to establish in what way the structure of a text is determined by the socio-cultural context, on the one hand, and by the function it achieves, on the other.

Generally speaking, a genre could be 'identified by reference to the typicality of the communicative purpose that it tends to serve' (Bhatia, 1999: 24). Swales (1990) also puts special emphasis on the shared communicative purposes, which are recognized by the members of a concrete discourse community. Namely these purposes shape the structure of the discourse which would share similar features with other exemplars of the genre in terms of language use, style, content, and intended audience. In Swales' opinion 'if all high probability expectations are realized, the exemplar will be viewed as prototypical by the parent discourse community' (Swales, 1990: 58), and consequently integrating the writers into that community.

Realising that the existing approaches place less emphasis on the external factors determining the written communication, researchers (Swales, 1990; Bhatia, 1993; Johns, 1995; Hyland, 1999, 2003, 2007; Bruce, 2011) have arrived at the conclusion that the genre-based approach seems to offer the optimal way of enhancing students' writing skills, as it considers not only the surface-level construction of a text, but also the communicative purposes it aims

to serve in a concrete context, being particularly suited for teaching academic and professional writing. Considered as a ‘social response to the process approach’ (Hyland, 2003), it shifts the focus from the cognitive processes involved while writing to factors outside the individual, such as: the socio-cultural context for which the text is to be produced, the readers to be addressed, and the specific rhetorical and linguistic conventions to be followed in order to achieve certain communicative purposes.

One could sense an apparent similarity between the product and genre-based approaches as they both seem to focus on the end result. However, unlike the product approach, the genre-based approach is not teacher-centred: ‘the incorporation of genre knowledge into pedagogy requires a learner-centred methodology that employs cycles of learning that involve both analysis and synthesis, where students have opportunities to deconstruct (actively and critically) and reconstruct the particular genres of their discipline’ (Bruce, 2011: 126).

The role of the teacher is to assist the students throughout the discovery of the particularities of a concrete genre, so that at the end they are able to produce their own text. It implies that the teacher scaffolds the students in the process of enhancing their writing skills. In Hyland’s opinion ‘to create a well-formed and effective text, students need to know the lexicogrammatical patterns which typically occur in its different stages, and the teacher’s task is to assist students towards a command of this through an awareness of target genres and an explicit grammar of linguistic choices’ (Hyland, 2003: 26). The researcher is convinced that in such a way students will be able to consciously manipulate the language and make the right choices while writing a text belonging to a specific genre.

Bruce (2011), for instance, suggests that in order to enhance students’ writing in EAP contexts, teachers should help to develop their discourse competence which will allow them to deconstruct and reconstruct discipline-specific texts. Similarly, the process should not be viewed as imitative; on the contrary, learners should be helped to gradually develop their own authorial voice, and thus acknowledge their membership to the discourse community they want to be affiliated to. Thus, Bhatia states that ‘instead of focusing on individual texts and their surface-level textual descriptions, genre practice should be regarded as a resource to re-create, innovate, exploit and manipulate conventional practices to achieve individual expression’ (Bhatia, 1999: 39).

Hyland (2007) summarises the main benefits genre-based pedagogy could offer. Thus, a genre-based pedagogy appears to be explicit as it aims to establish what exactly should be

learned in order to facilitate the acquisition of writing skills. It is systematic as it helps to acquire the writing skills by offering a valid framework. It is needs-analysis driven as it is based on the students' actual needs. It is supportive as the teacher has the role of scaffolding the students' learning and creativity. It is empowering, as it realises the dynamic nature of writing, thus allowing certain variations within the given framework. At the same time, it offers the possibility to develop critical skills, as learners are encouraged not only to understand but also to challenge valued discourses. Finally it is conscious-raising, as the teacher becomes more responsible for the choices he/she makes in order to confidently advise students on writing.

The approach comprises five main stages. The first stage consists of building the context. The learners are introduced to the socio-cultural context in which the particular genre is produced, and the communicative purposes it accomplishes are emphasized. The modelling stage consists in analysing and identifying the main features of the genre under consideration. Then both the teacher and the students jointly construct a text. At this stage, the teacher scaffolds the students' writing by formulating tasks focusing on particular stages or functions of the text. After these three stages, the students are encouraged to independently construct the text, being constantly provided with feedback throughout the process. Moreover, students are also expected to interact among themselves and give feedback to their peers. Thus, being members of their micro-discourse community students are thought to become more confident as writers and gradually integrate into the macro-discourse community related to their academic or professional field. As a result, we can see the dialogic essence of the process where students should link related texts, compare them with their own, and by comparing see if they were able to fulfil their particular communicative purposes.

Undoubtedly, great emphasis is placed on the end-result, i.e. the written text. Yet, it is considered only within its socio-cultural context, establishing its purposes and the audience it addresses. This allows us to conclude that the genre-based approach is not text-centred. Hyland suggests that genre-based approach is 'designed to produce better writers rather than simply better texts' (Hyland, 2007: 160).

However, due to the fact that great emphasis is put on the text itself, this approach might become too prescriptive if only the teaching of writing is to be considered. This might lead to the risk of underestimating the importance of the learning process itself. In this respect, Cheng argues for the need to conduct more research devoted to 'conceptualizing learning and to examining how learners, as complex and instantiated agents, operate in the ESP genre-based

pedagogical contexts' (Cheng, 2006: 86). The researcher believes that in doing so, 'the ESP genre approach to academic literacy will be able to better determine its objectives, clarify its approaches to learning and teaching, measure its effects, and, ultimately, measure up to its promise as one of the uniquely effective approaches to the teaching of the specialist varieties of English to L2 users' (Cheng, 2006: 86-87).

By means of conclusion, it should be noted that there is no mainstream accepted approach to writing that would be unanimously considered as the best approach to be applied in the classroom and to guarantee the improvement of the learners' writing skills. The literature review described so far shows both the benefits and the drawbacks of the existing approaches to teaching writing. Similarly, the research cited in this part has shown that the approaches under discussion have proved to help the students in their learning process. Thus, each approach can contribute in a way or another to the enhancement of specific writing skills.

It becomes important for the teacher to make an in-depth analysis of the students' needs, and set concrete goals to be achieved. Taking this into consideration he/she should apply the approach that would best suit him/her to help the learners improve their writing. There is no evidence that blending two or more approaches could hamper the learners' progress.

For example in Nunan's opinion (1991), the distinctions between product and process approaches are more ostensible than real. The researcher believes that 'there is no principled reason why process writing cannot be integrated with the practice of studying and even imitating written models in the classroom' (Nunan, 1991: 88).

Hence the need for a blended approach to teaching writing, where the students' actual needs would shape the instructors' pedagogical choices. That is why, 'writing teachers and tutors need to create structures and clarities for students, to teach them habits of mind that will help them make their way through college and into careers' (DeLuca, 2002: 140). Similarly 'they also need to create space so that while students are learning to follow conventions, there is enough room for something fresh and authentic to emerge' (ibidem.).

Chapter 3 :

Technology Supported Academic Writing

One cannot underestimate the tremendous impact technology has nowadays in every walk of life. Its influence has spread worldwide, and there are fewer and fewer people who have not embedded technology into daily life. It has dramatically changed not only one's way of living, but also their way of perceiving reality, particularly together with the advent of the World Wide Web. Therefore, it has become essential to integrate technology into the education process, in order to keep the students technologically literate, and thus prepared for the new demands of evolving society. In addition, it is a motivational tool enhancing the learning process.

In the subchapters below, the state of art of educational technology is reflected upon. The research conducted in the area clearly shows the influence it has nowadays in the education process. What should be kept in mind though is that it needs to be used to fulfil specific pedagogical goals and not to blindly follow it as a trend of the time.

Special attention is devoted to digital technology, particularly to Computer Assisted Language Learning, in the process of acquisition of a foreign language. Research in the field have demonstrated the advantages of CALL, such as making the acquisition process more motivational and meaningful, offering the possibility to better understand the socio-cultural context, boosting interactivity, and diminishing the affective filter.

Educational technology has also proved to enhance the acquisition of writing skills, making the instructional process more motivational. Nowadays, teachers should think of technology as a prerequisite as necessary as the textbook still is. However, just like in the case of any instructional tool, it should be clear from the very beginning in what way educational technology will assist teachers in their instruction process. Therefore, the use of educational technology should be carefully considered, as it will inevitably lead to rethinking and reshaping the process itself.

3.1 Educational Technology and its Impact on the Learning Process

Realising the importance of technology, the European Commission has included in the common European principles for teacher competences and qualifications the ability to work with knowledge, technology and information. Thus, well-qualified teachers:

‘need to be able to work with a variety of types of knowledge. Their education and professional development should equip them to access, analyse, validate, reflect on and transmit knowledge, making effective use of technology where this is appropriate. Their pedagogic skills should allow them to build and manage learning environments and retain the intellectual freedom to make choices over the delivery of education. Their confidence in the use of ICT should allow them to integrate it effectively into learning and teaching. They should be able to guide and support learners in the networks in which information can be found and built’ (European Commission, 2010:3).

Undoubtedly, technology has brought a new dimension into the classroom, becoming ‘one of the most significant mechanisms currently transforming the learning process’ (Laru *et al*, 2012: 29). Fiorentino (2013) suggests that there are two views of approaching education technology. The first is rather superficial where technology is merely considered an additional tool facilitating the instruction process, and making it more enjoyable. The second, however, refers to a more serious approach where education technology is thought as a means of redefining the instructional environment in general. In this case, technology is not viewed solely as the channel of transmitting knowledge, but as a resource to re-elaborate and adjust the methods and tools enhancing learning.

The incorporation of technology into the curriculum has changed throughout the years. Bonk (2009) distinguishes the so-called four ways of technology, which have transformed the teaching and learning processes, making them meaningful and accessible. In the researcher’s opinion, the first wave, ‘drilling learning’, was primarily used to reinforce learning. In the second wave, ‘enhancing learning’, technology has come to be viewed as a cognitive tool to enhance human thinking and reasoning. In the third wave, ‘extending learning’, the principles of shared learning have started to appear. However, it related to local contexts, involving the concrete community students belonged to. It is only the fourth wave, ‘transforming and sharing learning’, that changes the perception of both teaching and learning. Bonk believes that ‘sharing in this fourth phase of technology integration is much more flavourful and multimedia

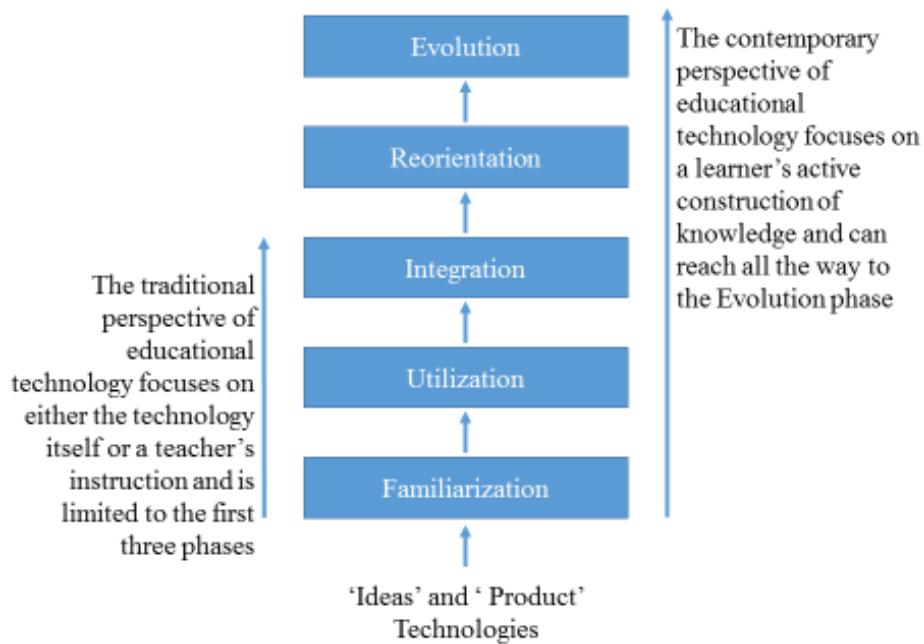
rich; undoubtedly, it will soon be widely accepted as standard educational practice' (Bonk, 2009: xvii).

The emergence of the Internet has contributed to this worldwide sharing as a means of learning/teaching. It should be noted that Windschitl (1998) speaks of access to information and connectedness as two key dimensions offered by World Wide Web. It thus, enables learners and teachers to have limitless access to information, on the one hand, and to stay connected, on the other.

Taking into account Windschitl's basic features, Liddicoat and Scarino (2013) have tried to classify the existing technologies into (1) information technology, and (2) social technology. The former comprises means aiming to inform, whereas the latter, means favouring the social interaction. Yet, the researchers point to the fact that the distinction is blurred as 'all information exists to be communicated, it is necessarily social' (Liddicoat, Scarino, 2013: 107). The distinction is, however, needed to get a clearer understanding in what way technologies can be used to fulfil concrete pedagogical goals.

It is important to realize that integrating technology in the process of learning does not imply the quantity of devices used in the classroom. As Hooper and Rieber point out, 'educational technology involves applying ideas from various sources to create the best learning environments possible for students' (Hooper, Rieber, 1995: 154). The researchers also suggest that students as well as teachers should form partnership with technology and that educational technology should be thought of in terms of Product Technology and Idea Technology that support the learning process and improve education. All this should happen gradually involving several phases, which are presented in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Model of adoption of both "idea" and "product" technologies in education
(Hooper, Rieber, 1995: 156)



In the familiarization phase the teacher is exposed to technology. In the next phase, utilization, the teacher tries to incorporate technology into their teaching process. In the integration phase, technology becomes a must-have, where the lesson without it is inconceivable. The 'integration' phase is thought to be a turning point in a teacher's decision-making, marking the starting point of reconceptualising the teaching process in general, definitely if the teacher chooses to progress even further in their adoption pattern. In the reorientation phase, the teacher reconsiders and reconceptualises the purpose and function of the classroom. The student becomes the subject, together with whom knowledge is constructed. Thus, the attention shifts from the process of teaching to the students' learning. The last phase aims to emphasize that the education system is constantly evolving, and that the teacher should always remain open to adapt new educational technologies that will help to better realize their pedagogical goals.

As seen, educational technology implies a reconceptualization of the educational process itself. It therefore becomes essential for the teacher 'to reflect on their own teaching style, on their own values, and on their own perception of the roles in order to understand how, and with what purpose, to use technology' (Caon, 2012: 29, our translation⁵).

⁵ Original text: 'È quindi fondamentale una riflessione sul proprio stile di insegnamento, sui propri valori e sulla personale concezione dei ruoli per poter poi comprendere come, e con quali scopi, utilizzare le tecnologie'.

Extremely appealing at a first glance, the use of educational technology should be viewed as a serious step when integrated in the teaching/learning processes, where all the factors have to be considered by the teacher. He/she should clearly understand in what way the students are going to benefit from it. It is not about making use of the latest technological device that counts, it is the outcome that the teacher should foresee as a result of its use. In this respect, Fiorentino (2013) states that although using technology in the teaching process has become a key topic nowadays in the world of education, it is sometimes considered superficially. Hence the need for further research to be conducted in the domain that will provide a conceptual framework, and thus will empower the teachers to sensibly use technology in their pedagogical practices.

Balboni (2012a) warns against the simplified use of educational technology, and argues for an ‘ethical’ use of educational technology. The researcher concludes that ‘an ethical approach to the use of technology does not imply developing students’ awareness of educational technology, it implies developing awareness of the complexity of the communicative competence’ (Balboni, 2012a: 46, our translation⁶). The students need to be helped to understand in what way technology can be used for educational purposes so that they are able to know to learn a language – a fundamental skill in the acquisition process.

3.2 Computer Assisted Language Learning

Although the word technology is meant to refer to a variety of devices (e.g. audio-tape players, video players, CD players, computers, etc.), it is very often related solely to computer technology because ‘computers have so pervaded our daily home and workplace contexts’ (Brown, 2000: 143). The various possibilities offered by computers prompted teachers to consider integrating them into the instruction process. Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) has proven to offer a variety of opportunities not only to bring diversity into the classroom but also to offer concrete support in developing the students’ macro-skills.

⁶ Original text: ‘Etica nell’uso delle tecnologie significa presentare agli studenti non tanto la potenzialità della tecnologia ai fini glottodidattici, ma la complessità della competenza comunicativa, il “sapere una lingua”, e dei processi di acquisizione della competenza, il “saper imparare una lingua,” in modo da evitare di confondere illusione e verità’

CALL is generally defined as ‘the search for and study of applications of the computer in language teaching and learning’ (Levy, 1997: 1). It is Warschauer and Healy cited by Brown who speak in favour of CALL pointing out the following benefits:

1. multimodal practice with feedback
2. individualization in a large class
3. pair and small-group work on projects, either collaboratively or competitively
4. the fun factor
5. variety in the resources available and learning styles used
6. exploratory learning with large amounts of language data
7. real-life skill building in computer use (Brown, 2000: 145).

As seen, CALL would address students with different learning styles. Consequently, the process of learning would become more individual, involving each student (something which is difficult to attain in large classes). The process would become more interactive and by extension more enjoyable. It would develop critical and analytical skills; being exposed to a variety of sources, students can choose the most suited to their needs. In addition, CALL can develop autonomous learning in students. Moreover, it can help the students acquire the skills for lifelong learning. In this respect, Busà says:

‘CALL applications offer individualized environments where learners learn at their own pace making autonomous decisions on the order of study topics, lesson reviews, lesson repeats, etc. In other words, CALL applications both promote language learning objectives and overcome traditional language classroom constraints’ (Busà, 2007: 165).

CALL has proven to be particularly useful for foreign language learners (Caburlotto, 2012; Bruni, 2013; Favaro, 2012; Fiorentino, 2013; Gong, 2002; Levy, 1997; Levy, 2006; Levy *et al*, 2011; Li, 2012). The various sites and programmes offering different types of grammar and vocabulary explanations and exercises, the software generating tests, the platforms posting online courses, sites organizing online classes – all are supposed to enhance the process of acquisition of a foreign language.

The integration of technology should not be done randomly. On the contrary, ‘in striving for a balanced approach in the context of CALL, one needs to know how best to marshal technological resources and then how best to combine them with face-to-face teacher-student and student-student interaction in the classroom’ (Levy, 2006: 2). Teachers should carefully

consider the benefits CALL could bring into the classroom as well as what concrete tool to use to develop a particular skill.

Successful use of CALL implies not only knowing the students' needs but also knowing in what way they use technology. Levy states that 'instructors simply need to be aware of the ways in which learners use communications technologies in their everyday lives and structure their use of those technologies for pedagogical purposes accordingly' (Levy, 2006: 10). Thus, the inclusion of technology requires careful consideration not only of specific pedagogical objectives to be achieved, but also of students' preferences. It is very often the case of the teachers adjusting their teaching process to the evolving world of digital technology. In this way, the teacher would be able to create the optimal context for the learning to take place. That is why the integration of educational technology is a dynamic process, which could differ from one class to another, and as a consequence require more time and effort from the part of the teacher to implement it appropriately.

Evans (2009) examined the results of the various research conducted in England, USA and Australia revealing the impact CALL had in the learning process. The results presented have shown overall positive outcomes of CALL. It seems that the use of CALL improves students' attainment, is motivating, makes the process more enjoyable, and boosts learner autonomy.

Similarly, some problems have been signalled out in Evans' s study (2009). For example, the learning process was hampered when the learning objectives were unclear and the focus of the technology use was diffuse. Another problem is in finding the balance between traditional teaching and CALL. It also appears that overexposure to online materials might do more harm than good. For example, Crystal signals out:

Foreign learners lack the intuitive sense of the boundary between standard and non-standard, or a sense of just how deviant a chatgroup usage might be, and by dint of exposure to repeated instances they may well end up misusing a construction, idiom, or other form. The bending and breaking of rules which is a hallmark of ludic (sic) linguistic behaviour, always presents a problem to those who have not yet developed a confident command of the rules *per se*. (Crystal, 2001: 236)

That is why the guidance of the teacher is vital in the acquisition process. However, reaching overhasty conclusions should be avoided as Evans suggests 'the value of these studies is precisely in their individuality and in the themes that emerge through the analyses' (Evans,

2009: 18). It is hence worth considering all the factors involved while using CALL and organise the instruction process accordingly.

The distinction among the existing CALL theoretical perspectives could help the teachers in their instruction process. Evans (2009) distinguishes three types of CALL:

1. structural CALL (involving pedagogical tasks focusing on accuracy);
2. communicative CALL (involving pedagogical tasks focusing on fluency generated by both synchronous and asynchronous communication);
3. integrative CALL (involving pedagogical tasks aiming to consider both fluency and accuracy).

Another aspect to be emphasized is to what degree the teachers are prepared to use digital technology in the classroom. It is important that the teachers acquire the skill of integrating CALL appropriately in their instruction process. Serragiotto (2012) speaks of a new paradigm in the training of teachers that should be based on multimedia applications, which will allow to raise awareness about the advantages of educational technology, on the one hand, and to become actively involved in the process, on the other. The researcher also mentions interactivity as another benefit of multimedia training of teachers. Being subjects themselves, teachers appear to get a better understanding of how to integrate CALL in their instruction process afterwards. Serragiotto relies on the teachers' experience after having attended the blended courses offered by the ITALS Laboratory.

Caburlotto (2012) believes that there are five key problems to be solved that will allow a successful integration of CALL in the curriculum, which can be summarized as follows:

1. It is important to locate the professionals able to offer training courses that will help teachers to use education technology appropriately.
2. The process of teacher training becomes essential in the formation of the modern teacher. Yet, not only should the teachers become technologically literate but also the students. It is important for them to understand how technology could be used in the learning process as well.
3. On the other hand, the technological factor should not be overlooked. Therefore, qualified experts should be trained to produce appropriate software for both teachers and students' needs.
4. A valid assessment system should be created that would take into consideration not only the linguistic proficiency but also the autonomous learning.

5. Teachers should take advantage of the education technology, however, a rigorous choice should be made among the various data existing nowadays.

As seen the teachers opting for CALL should consider all the factors involved in the instruction process. They should determine if a particular educational technology will help to achieve their pedagogical objectives, and what adjustments are to be made in order to meet the students' needs and interests. Similarly, they should be well-trained in order to be qualified to implement the necessary changes in the instruction process appropriately.

3.3 Writing and Technology

Nowadays writing is in most cases directly linked to technology. In the Report of the National Commission on Writing in American Schools and Colleges it is stated:

In today's complex, high-technology world, the importance of writing as a fundamental organizing objective of education is no less valid or practical. Writing, properly understood, is thought on paper. Increasingly, in the information age, it is also thought on screen, a richly elaborated, logically connected amalgam of ideas, words, themes, images, and multimedia designs' (The Neglected "R", 2003: 13)

The practice of writing on paper using a pen is being gradually replaced either by typing on the computer's keyboard, or by simply touching the screen of a tablet or smartphone. It has gone beyond merely facilitating one's life by making it more accessible and time-saving. Hyland (2009b) summarizes the effects of electronic technology on writing:

- Change creating, editing, proofreading and formatting processes
- Combine written texts with visual and audio media more easily
- Encourage non-linear writing and reading processes through hypertext links
- Challenge traditional notions of authorship, authority and intellectual property
- Allow writers access to more information and to connect that information in new ways
- Change the relationships between writers and readers as readers can often 'write back'
- Expand the range of genres and opportunities to reach wider audiences
- Blur traditional oral and written channel distinctions
- Introduce possibilities for constructing and projecting new social identities
- Facilitate entry to new on-line discourse communities
- Increase the marginalisation of writers who are isolated from new writing technologies

- Offer writing teachers new challenges and opportunities for classroom practice (Hyland, 2009b: 58-59).

As seen technology has significantly facilitated the writing process. Moreover, it has changed people's writing habits (now it is rather difficult to imagine oneself writing on a sheet of paper). For example, word-processing allows the writers to adjust the writing process at their own pace. They can cut, delete, copy, paste, and insert images, hyperlink, and format the text to their liking. The correction process has become even easier, moreover, spelling is autocorrected whereas basic syntactical irregularities are signalled out in the text. Sometimes the correct version is just a click away.

Together with the development of technology the instructors started to acknowledge the value it has in the development of writing skills. The tremendous shift in the teaching paradigm from behaviourist towards communicative approaches has been also supported by the appropriate use of technology. Undoubtedly, technology has substantially impacted the development of writing skills.

Balboni (2012b) emphasizes the fact that the value of technology in a writing classroom is in bridging the gap between the teacher and the students. Thus, the use of technology will make writing more interactive. Teachers could be seen as collaborators. Moreover, the process itself will come into focus and not the product as in the case where the final product (i.e. the written text) was presented at the end. Furthermore, the evaluation process will become part of the process as well.

The researcher also points to the benefits technology may have when used for group projects as empower learners to create content in a collaborative way. In this way, not only the students' writing skills will be enhanced, but also their communicative and social skills. Moreover, they will scaffold each other's learning.

Wang (2014) has conducted a research on using wikis to facilitate interaction and collaboration among EFL learners. He concludes that collaboration on a wiki in an EFL setting can contribute to both language development and social interaction, whereas, the students found the work engaging, challenging and interesting.

Indeed, more and more Web 2 tools (such as wikis, blogs, and forums) have been implemented in language classrooms to develop writing skills. In Ware and Warschauer's opinion, "asynchronous discussion formats, in particular, are believed to combine the interactive aspect of written conversations with the reflective nature of composing" (Ware,

Warschauer, 2006: 111). It is thus believed that students become more aware of the reader's expectations and construct their text thinking about their prospective audience. In such a way, writing starts to be viewed as a meaningful piece of communication where the students try to co-involve the reader in the process of meaning creation. This is believed to enhance and sustain the students' intrinsic motivation.

Communicative approach to language teaching is regarded as the optimal approach boosting foreign language acquisitions. Researchers have shown its benefits in the language classroom, where language use is acquired meaningfully and through interaction. The teacher's primary goal is to develop students' communicative competence (Brown, 2000; Celce-Murcia, Olshtain, 2000; Cook, 2000; Nunan, 1991; Widdowson, 1984), the Venetian school of Glottodidattica speaks of the need to develop intercultural communicative competence (Balboni, 2012b, Caon, 2006). Thus, the gradual shift from accuracy towards fluency in approaching language teaching has led to underestimate the importance of the grammatical and syntactical structure of the language, particularly when speaking about the written text.

Undoubtedly, as previously stated writing goes beyond merely mastering grammar and punctuation. However, sometimes they could be neglected as the emphasis is placed more on the oral speech, where attention is devoted more to language use in particular contexts as well as to the students' ability to communicate their ideas fluently.

Hinkel (2004) points to the importance of grammar and vocabulary, and discourse organization, particularly for academically bound non-native speakers. That is why a pedagogy of writing should include both facets of the language. Hegelheimer and Fisher (2006) suggest that technology could be used to teach grammar and improve the writing skills of ESL learners. The researchers have developed a program Internet Writing Resource for the Innovative Teaching of English (*iWRITE*), whose immediate application in the classroom could raise learners' grammatical awareness, encourage learner autonomy, and help learners prepare for editing or peer editing.

It should be mentioned, however, that grammatical awareness could be also raised by using a search engine or concordancers to check on the grammatical structure of a phrase, its contextual use, and the meanings it might imply. So the process of writing has become even more complex, involving technological literacies as well. Now, the students have access at the information they think they might need all the time. They should be able to realize in what way the online resources could be optimally used to help them produce appropriate texts. The

teachers could assist them in the process by offering advice on which sites to use or how to check their mistakes.

As seen the use of technology to enhance writing skills involves a complex of new skills and abilities that both teachers and students should possess. It should be kept in mind though that technology could be used as a tool by the teacher only when the pedagogical objectives are clearly defined whereas the possible outcomes foreseen. Even the existing results of research conducted in the area differ one from the other. One explanation can be found in the fact that teaching and learning are individual processes.

It is true that pedagogies could be conceptualized to support the participants involved in the act of teaching/learning, however, each could choose those that will create the optimal environment for the learning to take place. They should be adjusted to the participants' needs and objectives. That is why it becomes impossible to determine which the best approach to teaching writing skills is, as more often than not they overlap in actual instructional practices. The same could refer to the technology involved in the process. What seems to help in the development of writing skills in one group of students, might not scaffold the acquisition of writing skills in another. That is why, instructors should be very careful while making the decision and take into consideration all the factors.

Overall, technology that might be used to enhance students writing skills can be divided in four groups:

1. **Word Processing:** computer application for composing written text. Students are able to make as many modifications to written text as they think necessary, before and after saving. They can revise the text, and make substitutions, deletions, additions, and block moves.
2. **Networking (synchronous):** computer-assisted classroom discussion (CACD) such as chat, which can be used for instantaneous communication in the form of written communication. Social networks could also be used for this practice.
3. **Networking (asynchronous):** e-mail, listservs, newsgroups, and bulletin boards which could be used for threaded written discussions.
4. **Hypermedia/Hypertext:** World Wide Web (WWW, Web pages and Web sites) could be used for creating products for a specific purpose to a wider audience.

However, teachers might consider using multiple technologies that would help them in achieving their pedagogical goals.

3.4 Academic Writing in an Electronic Age

The use of technology in academic settings has also proven to be extremely beneficial. Nowadays, much of the information needed for a student's academic development could be found online. Internet has changed not only the writing but also the reading habits (as previously stated reading is a skill primarily acquired to writing, which determines the process of writing itself).

For example, the search engine Google Scholar has been of great help in finding online articles related to a particular academic field. The existing large amount of online journals has facilitated the students' lives by allowing them to get immediate access to up-to-date information in their research area.

A modern student should be viewed as an active participant in a digital, interconnected world, where he/she could not only discover new things, but could also share his/her knowledge, give feedback, state an opinion, and thus signal out his/her affiliation to a particular discourse community. Thus, the use of technology in academic settings has connected researchers, and enabled their interaction. That is why an aspiring researcher-writer, is above all an engaged learner connected in a network of both virtual and authentic relations.

This has changed the way of teaching in higher education settings, where English has become the most commonly used language of communication in the academic world. As previously stated EAP is vital for those who want to be affiliated to a larger discourse community, either receiving or producing new knowledge in their field of interest.

Together with the development of technology, the process of teaching in higher education institutions has changed. Moreover, 'EAP education in the digital age calls for new pedagogical paradigms which can help learners to develop new literacies and skills required for successful communication in academic and professional contexts' (Kuteeva, 2011: 44). However, the research conducted in the area so far could not offer a comprehensive pedagogical framework as "the full implications of the communications revolution are not yet apparent or completely understood, and we still have a long way to go before we can be sure we are using its potential most effectively in our teaching' (Hyland, Hamp-Lyons, 2002: 8). That is why researchers believe that further research in the area should be conducted in order to fully examine the use of technology in EAP contexts.

While researching in what way wikis could be used by students while learning to write for academic and professional purposes, Kuteeva (2011) came to the conclusion that the use of wikis had a good impact on students, raising their awareness of the audience. However, it was also noted that students paid attention to grammatical correctness and text organization above all. The researcher believes that this could be accounted for by the special emphasis on form of EFL education all over the world. In addition wikis do not have any spelling or grammar checker that word processing has. However, the grammatical accuracy and textual organisation should not be overlooked, particularly in writing for academic or professional purposes.

Trying to determine in what way technology could impact the students' writing, Stapleton (2010) made an exploratory case study of a master's student in her process of composing a 4000-word essay. The researcher suggests that there are significant differences in the way time is allotted to the composing process while using technology as compared to that while using the pen and paper. It is argued that the cognitive resources writers use in an electronic environment might differ from those used in a non-electronic environment.

However, the author also points to some caveats in the student's application of electronic tools. Thus, the students did not seem to be familiar at first with Google Scholar search engine, which, in her case, would have been much more useful in her writing process. She also had rudimentary knowledge of keywords searches. There were problems also with citing in her paper that did not meet academic standards. Hence the need for basic researching skills integrated in the curriculum as well as in the given feedback.

Stapleton also revealed that Wikipedia was the first source the student accessed. In the researcher's opinion this source could be used only as a first-stop source. In this way, the students would get a general idea what to research for more deeply. This is what the student in this particular study did. All in all, Stapleton thinks that the teaching of writing should be designed taking into consideration the electronic environment as it determines the cognitive processes used to generate and express ideas in written language.

Carrió-Pastora and Romero-Fortezab (2013) also argue for a reconceptualization of strategies in teaching writing in a second language, as successful writing involves, among other things, the ability to integrate information learnt by the writer in different kinds of contexts, including information found on the internet. It is believed that by using WWW the students' performance will improve.

The two researchers have come to the conclusion that in order to improve students' writing skills with the help of WWW, the teacher should first design the activities with clear objectives and foresee what specific aspects could be improved. They also point to the fact that the assessment criteria should be distinct and reveal to students what exactly is to be done in order to achieve the set objectives. Finally, the researchers emphasize that the individual characteristics of each students should not be overlooked by the teacher, who is advised to offer individual tutorials during the training process to scaffold the students' writing. In this way, students will obtain better results and be more motivated.

Thus, another issue to bring into focus is the student-teacher/tutor relationship. The emergence of blended courses has prompted some change in the way tutoring should take place. For example, Sharpe and Pawlyn (2009) have researched the role of the tutor in Blended E-Learning and have arrived at the conclusion that an improvement of staff development for tutors is needed so that they could optimally assist the students in the process of learning. As the tutors perceive the changing relationship between themselves and their students, their role in supporting student group work and professional learning becomes more evident. Hence, the need for developing new tutoring skills.

It is true that, nowadays, students are expected to be autonomous learners. However, the presence of the tutor is still vital in the development of academic writing skills. He/she should scaffold them in the process of becoming accomplished writers.

Lillis (2001) speaks of the problems students face nowadays when they are supposed to produce academic texts. In her opinion, the main problem resides in lack of communication between students and teachers. Moreover, students do not seem to realize what exactly they are supposed to write. They seem unaware of the fact that they are expected to transform knowledge and not just merely tell it. It is believed that 'the conventions students are expected to write within are difficult to learn because they remain implicit in pedagogic practice, rather than being explicitly taught' (Lillis, 2001: 50).

In Lillis's research it is clear that the student-writers involved in her project want to engage in a dialogue with their tutors. They wanted to spend time with her, as tutor-researcher, to talk about their writing. Their desire to dialogue more with their tutors could also be viewed in the comments they made. Lillis concludes that 'their desire for dialogue contrasts with the frustration and disappointment they often feel about the type of relationship they have with tutors' (Lillis, 2001: 72).

The use of technology could help in the students-tutor interaction. Their dialogue could take place via the various networking technologies (both synchronous and asynchronous). The tutor could create a discussion forum or a site/weblog for the students where his/her objectives would be clearly defined. Thus, an interactive academic network would be created, involving not only the tutor and one student but other students as well. In this way, a micro-discourse community would be formed where knowledge would not only be shared, but also co-constructed.

Chapter 4 :

Blogging and its Relevance in an EAP Writing Classroom

The use of weblogs as an online way of journal keeping has aroused interest prompting more and more people to keep a blog to share their experiences and ideas. Thus, various blogs have been created, being grouped according to the common interests of bloggers. Nowadays, there are blogs related to political science, education, fashion, photography, etc. Prominent figures, and ordinary people write online journals to communicate or reflect upon a particular issue.

The idea that blogging could be used in the teaching / learning process started to be seriously considered by instructors the moment blogs appeared. More and more teachers have incorporated blogging into the instruction practice, using them as class administration tools, class discussion boards, place where of student/teacher work could be stored, and knowledge management systems (Campbell, 2003; Dohn, 2010; Fellner and Apple, 2006; Kavaliauskienė et al., 2006a, 2006b; Wu, 2006). Blogs could be personal reflections on the teaching practice, or more discipline specific where the primary aim is to connect with other professionals and share their knowledge.

Blogs have started being used in higher education settings as well where they are viewed as electronic spaces where communication could occur among students. They also offer space for students – instructors' interaction. Moreover, they can interconnect learners to a larger discourse community. Studies have also suggested (Blood, 2002; Repman *et al.*, 2005) that students' motivation seem to increase together with the possibility of sharing their ideas to a larger audience. Thus, writing will be visibly interactive and might become more meaningful for the students.

Indeed, blogging tools could be used to develop new skills related to technology on the one hand, and to the composing process on the other. A web publication in an academic setting used to enhance writing skills might motivate students to become confident writers able to clearly communicate their viewpoints and enter a dialogue with the affiliated academic world. This is possible when a micro-discourse community is created in the form of a blogroll where students and instructors follow each other's blogs. The essence of blogging in this particular

case is to be connected within one's own discourse community. It is true, however, that if the domain is public, there is always the possibility to connect to a larger audience.

One advantage to using blogs lies in their simplicity to be created and to be maintained. Thus, minimal training is required from the part of the students. Moreover, blogging tools have been constantly improved to make them accessible for everyone and to promote interactivity among bloggers. All in all, weblogs can be used by both experts aiming to broadcast their expertise and average people wishing to share their journals with others.

4.1 Definitions

Weblogs or simply blogs are generally defined as 'a personal journal maintained on the Web' (Cohen, Krishnamurthy, 2006: 615), whose posts are chronologically displayed. As no sophisticated technological knowledge is needed to keep a blog, it has become popular, being used in various fields. However, 'behind its apparent simplicity, the blog is a hybrid tool that mediates through a multiplicity of extremes' (Bruni, 2013: 84, our translation⁷).

Generally a blog page includes:

- title (graphically it is the most prominent part in a blog);
- the name of the post author;
- post content;
- comment (the section below the post text where the readers can leave their comments and the post author can reply to them; this is the part where the actual interaction could take place);
- post tag/categories (one or more tags can be assigned to a post, which allows to highlight the main topics).

It should be mentioned that a post content has a complex structure as 'a typical blog consists of some text paragraphs often with embedded links (either internal links to another section of the same blog or external links), occasionally a few images, pointers to older sections of the same blog, and (in some cases) a set of reverse pointers to the blog itself made in other blogs'

⁷ Original text: 'Dietro la sua apparente semplicità, il blog è uno strumento ibrido che media tra una molteplicità di estremi.'

(E. Cohen, B. Krishnamurthy, 2006: 616). It could become a channel for asynchronous communication to take place between the writer and his/her followers.

Winer cited by Du and Wagner (2006) has enumerated the main characteristics a weblog has. Thus, a blog is:

- personalized (it is primarily designed for personal use, that is why the style of writing is usually personal and informal);
- web-based (blogs can be accessed via a web browser and are easy to maintain);
- community-supported (blogs can link to other weblogs and websites, enabling the linkage of ideas, and hence stimulating knowledge generation and sharing between bloggers);
- automated (blogging tools help bloggers to present their words without the hassle of writing HTML code or program; instead, bloggers just need to concentrate on the content).

The archive is always shown on the home page of a blog. In this way, the reader can easily access the content of older blogs. There is also the possibility to include a blogroll on the main page. This is particularly important for those who want to create small communities writing on the same subjects. In this way, the reader would always have the opportunity to look at what others have said on a particular issue related to the common field of interest.

4.2 Blogging Practice and its Application to Language Education

Educational uses of blogs started gradually to be considered in the context of classroom learning. The primary benefit that could be immediately seen as they seemed to be ideal platforms for student writing. Moreover, instructors believed that blogging could make the students more intrinsically motivated to write.

Campbell (2003) believes that weblogs can support effective language learning. He distinguishes three types of blogs that could help in the instruction process: the tutor weblog, the learner weblog, and the class weblog. The tutor weblog can promote exploration of English websites, encourage online verbal exchange by use of comment buttons, provide class or syllabus information, and serve as a resource of links for self-study. The learner weblog can be kept individually or in small groups, thus promoting collaboration. They offer the optimal

context for the improvement of writing and reading skills. The class weblog can be a joint group project involving the collaboration of the entire class.

Wu (2006) has made an attempt at formulating possible ways to use a blog in EFL classes. The scholar also discusses the potential advantages and shortcomings of using blog in EFL. Wu's conclusion is that blogs can be regarded as a new promising vehicle of extreme value for teaching of English as a foreign language.

Fellner and Apple (2006) came to the conclusion that blogging can improve the lexical complexity and writing fluency in students. Having been limited in time, they still managed to demonstrate that writing blogs could enrich students' vocabulary and develop their writing skills. Moreover, the results could be achieved among a group of low proficiency, low motivation students in a short intensive English CALL program. Although the researchers admit that the students did not show at the end advanced English proficiency, they strongly believe that 'lack of complexity in English expression does not reflect lack of complexity in thought' (Fellner, Apple, 2006: 24). In their opinion, the respect instructors should show for the maturity of thought of their students could motivate the students to improve their expressive ability as well.

Kavaliauskienė et al (2006a, 2006b) discuss the implications of blogging in learner development in their research. The researchers have come to the conclusion that blogging has had an overall positive impact on the learners' language awareness and development. It seems that students enjoyed the process as they were supposed to do various activities, and as a result they were more motivated while doing them. In addition, blogging permitted the students to overcome the fear of making errors and enhance self-esteem. It also appears that students tend to reflect more on their performance when they are expected to write for an audience. The researchers also point to the interactive character of communication through blogging as another positive factor of blogging use in the instruction process.

Dohn (2010) examined the benefits and limitations of using wikis and blogs in the process of teaching. The researcher has enumerated the following advantages: flexible learning, development of new competences needed in the present social context, pedagogical advantages, learner motivation, and ease of participation. Yet, the use of wikis and blogs seemed to cause problems when it came to the anchoring of the learning activities, assessment and quality criteria, the role of the teacher, and implicit competence demands on learners. Dohn believes that the latter should not prevent teachers from integrating blogs and wikis into the

instruction practice, they should rather be considered carefully in order to find the optimal solution how to use them meaningfully in their practice.

The various research conducted in the field have demonstrated that, overall, the use of blogs in the instruction process helps to enhance the students' writing skills. They can be a great tool for promoting collaborative work and interaction among students. Another important aspect resides in the fact that blogging could contribute to autonomous learning as it should be above all considered a tool for learning outside the classroom. Thus, blogging can offer the optimal context to improve students' writing skills by creating micro-discourse communities the primary aim of which should be sharing and co-construction of knowledge through continuous interaction.

4.3 Blogging and Academic Writing

Blogging can be used in academic settings to develop the students' writing skills. Much research has been done to analyse the impact of this tool on the students' performance. The results differ pointing to the fact that the learning / teaching process is individual, and all the factors should be considered for successful integration of blogging in the writing practice.

Murray *et al* (2007) conducted a research on the way writing blogs impacted the students' language proficiency. The students were asked to keep personal blogs where they would reflect upon the learning process. Through self-reflection and self-expression they were expected to improve their writing, which was to be assessed by instructors. The research has looked at optimal ways to integrate blogging practice into the curriculum. It has tried to establish some criteria of assessing and rewarding student creative expression within the blog medium. The researchers have come to the conclusion that blog writing in language acquisition could be a good pedagogical tool.

Thus, in order to establish a viable blog integration, several issues should be considered.

- Issues of validity and accountability in evaluating the written content.
- Their personal objectives and aims in terms of written skill development.
- The specific aspect of writing to be targeted (for example, discourse specific, self-expression, grammatical testing).

- The context of the task (for example single-authored (expressivist) or collaborative approaches (socio-cognitivist)). (Murray *et al*, 2007: 16)

Apart from these, the researchers also pointed to the fact that the learning environment, learning profiles, and the context should be also carefully considered. Thus, the classroom-based environment would differ from self-study; whereas, the degree of the students' previous exposure to ICT use would influence their performance as well. That is why, teachers should create optimal contexts for the students' composing process. Moreover, students should clearly understand in what way blogging could improve their writing skills. Murray *et al* (2007) concluded that if all the issues are taken into consideration, most students come to realize the benefits of blogs for the improvement of their academic writing.

Another phenomenological research conducted by Lin *et al* (2013) show that blogging practice did not help the students to improve their writing skills. Moreover, they did not seem to be motivated to engage voluntarily in second language blogging activities. However, the researchers admit that the cause to this rejection might lie in the fact that students worked by themselves on most occasions, not having the possibility to interact with their tutors. This is a problem which has been previously signalled out in Lillis' research (2001). The researchers also suggest that it is better to consider the students' learning styles first (Carrió-Pastora and Romero-Fortezab (2013) spoke about the importance of individual approach in technology integration). Lin *et al* also believe that the results might be due to the low language proficiency of students who did not feel confident to write in English. The aim of the research was to emphasize that blogging could not be used appropriately if all the factors have not been carefully considered.

Tekinarslan (2008) conducted a qualitative research on the way blogs were used by the instructor and undergraduate students in their teaching and learning environment. The results show the positive attitudes students have towards the use of this tool, considering that it has contributed to the development of their research and writing skills. The researcher summarized the advantages of blogging, which are: enhancement of students' writing skills, development of information searching and literature review skills, and convenience for submitting assignments electronically.

However, the students complained about the fact that many could not use computers outside the campus of the Turkish university where the study was conducted. So in order to have a

successful application of a technological tool, the instructor should consider how often the students will be able to have access to it.

Tekinarslan's research also brings into focus the issue of plagiarism in students' writing. Four of the students in the study simply copied and pasted the content from other sources. They justified this by claiming that they had insufficient knowledge in citing and paraphrasing, and lacked awareness about terms of use for online information sources.

Another important finding worth considering is the role of the instructor in the process. Although the researchers did not focus on this in their research, it seems that the instructor's presence is still important for the students. The role of the instructor is to scaffold their learning, to guide them by giving feedback.

4.4 Enhancing Interactivity in Academic Settings through Blogging

As the latest research in writing shows the necessity to develop reader awareness in the writer, the use of blogs could help the students to develop this awareness. Blogging can offer the possibility of micropublishing, where there is the possibility to make one's work known to a larger audience, an audience that can go even beyond the micro-discourse community the students belong to. Thus, they would become more conscious to meet the potential readers' expectations.

Thus, Williams and Jacobs (2004) strongly believe that blogging has the potential to be a transformational technology for teaching and learning in academic settings. In the researchers' opinion blogging can be a tool where students can learn from each other. It would promote autonomous learning, but above all encourage interaction among peers. It can also foster the premises for lifelong learning, a competence needed for professional development. They conclude that a blogging tool would be a valuable addition to any learning management system.

Fellner and Apple (2006), in their research also point to the fact that although blogging was used to develop writing skills, the task also aimed at enhancing meaningful negotiation through the comments they could make below a post. It turned out that namely this interactive aspect of the task made it more appealing to students who eagerly engaged in communicating with their peers via comments. Moreover, it is reported that they were even impatient to get a reply immediately as they would often stand up and walk to another student's computer to find out

why their classmate had not responded to a posted message yet. The researchers signal out that this caused frustration in students. Yet, in their opinion, it created a ‘facilitating’ anxiety that motivated students to write posts and comment those of their peers.

Zhang (2009) has suggested some helpful pointers to facilitate using blogs for English writing. Thus, in the researcher’s opinion, the use of blogs can promote comfortable interaction for students. Indeed, blogging can ease the anxieties students might have in face-to-face interactions. Blogs can also motivate the students to write and interact. In this way, students’ confidence in their writing skills would increase and, thus, help them to convey their message fluently and accurately in their writing. Zang, however, points out that there is a tendency not to trust their peers’ opinion so much. The students’ self-confidence affects their judgment to accept or reject others’ comments. Students should be receptive towards the feedback given by their peers. Yet, they should develop critical skills besides confidence that will allow them to accept or reject the suggested feedback with solid arguments.

Sun, Chang (2012) examined in what way blogs and their interactive and collaborative features help academically-advanced graduate students process academic writing knowledge and make sense of their writer identity. The researchers think that blogs can help students to actively engage in a process of knowledge sharing thus enhancing their learning. It also seems that blogs endow students with the sense of authorship, making them more confident as writers and responsible for the quality of their final product. Sun and Chang also point to the importance of the tutor’s presence in the blogging process who are to monitor the students’ interaction and provide timely intervention. They should scaffold the learning process by participating in the students’ discussion and whenever there is need for clarification to offer it either online or in class. Consequently, the interactive dialogues will be kept on target and meaningful. That is why, the researchers argue for the need of a judicious incorporation of blogging into current pedagogic decisions.

It our belief that, if used appropriately, blogging can contribute to the students’ becoming confident writers. That is why, Balboni’s suggestion (2012a) to apply technology ‘ethically’ should be kept in mind while deciding whether the tool would help achieve to concrete pedagogical goals or would hamper the students’ progress. It is essential to make the students understand in what way the tool can contribute to the enhancement of their writing skills. The presence of the teacher is also essential for a successful use of blogging. Moreover, the teacher

should be part of this networking micro-discourse community to scaffold the development of the writing skills on the one hand, and to promote students' interaction on the other.

The literature review of this chapter has shown that academic writing is a particular act of communication which should be considered within a concrete discourse community. It is a dialogue happening between a sender, who has the purpose to share or add his/her knowledge to the already existing knowledge related to an academic context he/she is affiliated to, and a receiver, who has the purpose to accept or reject that knowledge relying on his/her academic experience. The processes of both encoding and decoding the intended message will be determined by the shared background knowledge the participants of this act of communication have. Thus they will use the specific conventions of their discourse community in order to be successful in their virtual interaction.

Academic writing is an essential skill students need to develop as their academic progress substantially depends on their ability to communicate their knowledge in written form not only accurately but also appropriately. Hence the teachers need to look for the optimal ways to facilitate the development of this skill. As seen there is no specific approach that would help the students to improve their academic writing skills. That is why teachers need to carefully consider all the factors and decide upon the approach(es) that would best suit their pedagogical goals.

Technology integration in the teaching/learning process is another important issue to be considered nowadays. Both teachers and students need to look for ways that will help them to facilitate the learning process with the help of technology. Yet, in doing so teachers need to understand in what way exactly a particular technological tool will help their students to develop a concrete skill. Only when students' needs are thoroughly considered the teachers might integrate technology in the curriculum.

As our interest is devoted to academic writing we tried to review some literature on how technology might help to develop students' academic writing skills. In particular, we were interested to understand whether blogging can be used for this purpose. The examined research in the field has shown the benefits of blogging if used in academic contexts. However, there are scholars who have a rather sceptical attitude when it comes to the use of blogging for

academic writing. That is why we wanted to understand if blogging can be used as a pedagogical tool to enhance academic writing skills in our particular academic context.

The purpose of the research was to determine the students' perception of academic writing in general, and of blogging used for academic writing tasks in particular. We thought this to be worthy of research as we wanted to determine the cause of the students' poor quality academic writing, and to look for viable solutions that might help to improve the students' academic writing skills. The first focus of our research is meant to understand what struggles students encounter when writing for academic purposes, and what impact the World Wide Web has in their academic writing. The second focus aims to determine the way students respond to the use of blogs for academic writing tasks, what role the teacher has in the process, and what strategies should be applied in order to help the students to develop their academic writing skills with the help of blogging.

PART 2:

THE STUDY

Chapter 5 :

Methodology

The primary purpose of the present research is to determine whether the use of parallel blogging might help students to develop academic writing skills. Another significant aspect to be investigated is to see how students respond to using blogs as interactive tools for academic purposes. This chapter is devoted to the research methods and procedures used in the study both to answer the research questions and to analyse the collected data. Particularly, it illustrates the type of research specifying what paradigm has been followed. It describes the research approach that was adopted showing how it has evolved. An overview of the research site and study participants is also included here, followed by the description of writing objectives and weekly assignments that students were expected to complete. Then data collection and procedures are described, followed by data analysis. Issues such as the researcher's role and the validity of the research findings are addressed at the end of this chapter.

5.1 Type of Research

This part illustrates the research paradigm that was followed in the present study. It also briefly summarises the main characteristics of the action research adopted by the researcher. The statement of the problem that generated the research is also included here, as well as the research questions. The last sub paragraph deals with the research methods used for conducting the research.

5.1.1 Research Paradigm

The present study is a primary type of research which follows the constructivist paradigm (Creswell, 2010). This paradigm was chosen because it reveals my viewpoint that reality is socially constructed and depends on the participants' views of the concrete situation. Thus, the research will be influenced by the participants' background and experiences. It implies that such research is context bound and involves historical and social knowledge in the

interpretation of the data. Creswell believes that, while following this worldview, ‘the researcher's intent is to make sense (or interpret) the meanings others have about the world’ (Creswell, 2010: 21). That is why the constructivist paradigm is also referred to as interpretative.

The constructivist paradigm has been applied to this research as it investigates the addressed questions within the socio-cultural context in which the participants (i.e. teachers and students) study/work. Moreover, my own background allows me to interpret the data taking into consideration my own personal, cultural, and historical experiences, as I was also part of that context. This factor helped me in delineating the problem and in proceeding inductively with the research.

5.1.2 Research Approach

Action research was the approach used to conduct this research as it tends to investigate multiple socially-constructed realities which are context bound. Its main aim is ‘to contribute both to the practical concerns of people in an immediate problematic situation and to the goals of social science by joint collaboration within a mutually acceptable ethical framework’ (Rapoport 1970: 499). Thus, the researcher determines the problem existing in a particular setting and looks for possible solutions that can help to solve the issue. However, such a process requires collaboration on the part of all the participants involved in it.

Carr and Kemmis define action research as ‘a form of self-reflective enquiry undertaken by participants in social situations in order to improve the rationality and justice of their own practices, their understanding of these practices, and the situations in which the practices are carried out’ (Carr and Kemmis, 1986: 162). Such research requires critical reflection on pedagogical problems which are related to the social background and experiences of the participants involved in the process.

The benefits of action research are that it can result in the improvement of the educational process and it can introduce change into the social enterprise. Norton (2009) lists the main characteristics of action research, which are:

- it is a social practice;
- it aims towards improvement;
- it is cyclical;

- it requires systematic inquiry;
- it is reflective;
- it is participative;
- it is determined by the practitioners.

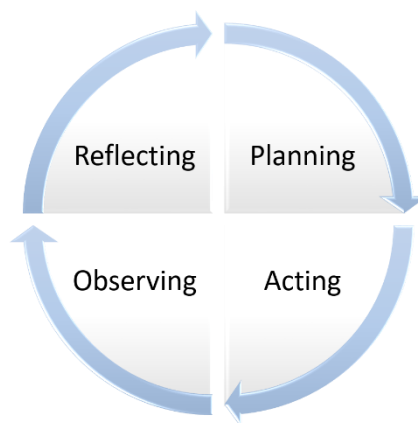
Norton believes that the primary purpose of pedagogical action research is ‘to systematically investigate one’s own teaching/learning facilitation practice, with the dual aim of improving that practice and contributing to theoretical knowledge in order to benefit student learning’ (Norton, 2009: 59).

However, action research does not imply that the researcher should necessarily be the teacher. Certainly, the close link between research and teaching is crucial for this type of research. However, action research can be ‘conducted by or in cooperation with teachers for the purpose of gaining a better understanding of their educational environment and improving the effectiveness of their teaching’ (Dornyei, 2007: 191).

There are several factors, such as lack of time or lack of knowledge in conducting research that prevents teachers from undertaking action research (Dornyei, 2007; Norton, 2009). It is true that teachers reflect upon their teaching and look for ways to improve it, yet, they are not always sufficiently prepared to conduct the research per se. That is why, collaboration between the teacher and the researcher is extremely important. Thus, the researcher can co-opt the teacher in a research project or collaborate with the teacher by participating equally in the process.

Speaking about the cycle of the action research, it can be represented as follows:

Figure 4: Action research cycle



On the surface, the action research spiral seems to work in a simple way. The researcher plans the action, implements the change by doing, observes the process as it evolves, and finally reflects upon the results. However, some unplanned problems might come up in the process. That is why, parallel cycles of research might be needed in order to progress in a logical way. On the whole, this spiral implies that the researcher should carefully consider all the issues involved before, while, and at the end of the research.

Very often action research is referred to as learning by doing. Knowledge derives from practice, whereas practice is informed by knowledge. All the components are interlinked to solve a real problem in a concrete situation. It might be considered prescriptive, which is erroneous. It analyses the results taken from the collected data, and might result in recommendations for good practise. Thus, it describes the problem, considers the possible causes and looks for ways to solve the problem.

Indeed, this type of research suggests an action in the form of concrete pedagogical recommendations, which might be used only if considered appropriate for a particular socio-cultural context. That is why, teachers should be aware of their students' needs and experiences in order to be able to apply or reject these recommendations. Apart from this, the teacher himself/herself might not be prepared to embrace that change. That is why, particularly when it comes to qualitative research, it is good to replicate the study and compare the results.

5.1.3 Research Problem and Research Questions

The need for the study has arisen from my teaching experience as a university lecturer at Alecu Russo Balti State University. While teaching practical classes of English as well as some theoretical courses in English, I observed that students encountered difficulties in doing written assignments for academic purposes. Further, in the conversations I had with my former colleagues, I noticed that they complained about the same issue. The students seemed not to meet the teachers' expectations. Moreover, there were many cases where they approached the task superficially, or even plagiarised entire texts from the internet.

Although there is a considerable amount of literature on academic writing as well as on how to develop or improve one's writing skills available in the university library as well as online, the students appeared to be poorly prepared to produce coherent texts in English. That

prompted me to consider what might be the cause of the students' poor performance and what could be possibly done to improve the situation.

Thus, the primary purpose of this study is to present the results of the action research aiming to discover the students' perception of academic writing in general, on the one hand, and consider whether blogging could be used as a tool to enhance academic writing skills, on the other. Consequently, there are two main foci of interest. The first focuses on outlining whether the students realize the specificity and use of written communication in academic settings. The second examines the results of the experimental course in order to show whether blogging can help students to develop their academic writing skills.

Two central questions have been formulated, the first is followed by two subquestions, and the second by three subquestions.

Central question 1 related to the first focus of the study is: What is the students' understanding of academic writing?

It is hypothesized that very often students lack understanding of the specificity of academic writing, which leads to the poor results they get for the various papers they are assigned to write according in their academic programmes. Their academic writing skills seem to be poorly developed, considered sometimes by them unimportant or unnecessary for their academic progress. Establishing the cause of their attitude towards academic writing might help to improve their writing skills in the future.

Subquestion 1.1: What are the most common struggles students encounter in the process of writing for academic purposes?

It is assumed that students find writing for academic purposes challenging because they have not acquired academic writing skills. Thus, they appear to have difficulty in formulating a topic sentence, which is followed by logically connected supporting sentences. As a consequence, their writing becomes incoherent. It is also assumed that students erroneously think that there is no need to develop academic writing skills as they have already acquired basic writing skills. An assumption which results in their having difficulty in producing appropriate content that has the organisation and style of an academic text.

Students also seem to lack confidence due to insufficient writing practice for academic purposes, on the one hand, and absence of clear understanding of what exactly is expected from

them, on the other. This leads to poor motivation to produce appropriate texts. Hence, the lack of desire to improve their writing skills.

Subquestion 1.2: What is the impact of the World Wide Web on their writing for academic purposes?

The impact technology has nowadays in every walk of life is believed to have influenced students' writing habits as well. The internet is considered a valuable resource of knowledge sharing and dissemination. That is why it seems of extreme importance to understand whether students are competent users of this resource. Delineating the way they use the Internet might help to improve their academic writing skills by offering proper guidance.

Central question 2 related to the second focus of the study is: Does blogging enhance academic writing skills?

Initially thought as personal online journals, weblogs have started to be used for pedagogical purposes as well. It is hypothesized that blogging will motivate students to write and change their attitude towards the process of writing. It is thought that writing will become more interactive and meaningful for students. Writing for academic purposes might thus become a way of sharing ideas within their academic micro-community. Furthermore, it is hypothesized that posting their writing online will increase the responsibility for the quality of their writing. This might lead to the improvement of their academic writing skills.

Subquestion 2.1: How do students respond to the use of blogs for academic writing tasks?

As blogging appears to support effective language learning in general, it is hypothesized that students will positively respond to the use of blogs. Weblogs might boost motivation in students. It is assumed that students will become more confident writers on the one hand, and more critical readers, on the other.

Subquestion 2.2: What strategies might the teacher apply in order to help the students to improve their academic writing skills?

There are four main approaches to developing academic writing skills (cfr. Chapter 1.2). The process approach is believed to be the most commonly-used approach to teaching writing. It is hypothesized that blending approaches might be more beneficial for students. Thus, the teacher might consider using various strategies, and, as a consequence, create the optimal context for the writing to take place.

Subquestion 2.3: What is the role of the teacher?

The teacher is believed to facilitate the acquisition process in this paradigm. He/she is expected to scaffold the students' learning by offering guidance throughout the process. Yet, his/her role is assumed to be limited in order to boost autonomous learning. Indeed, undergraduate students are expected to do a great amount of work individually. When it comes to writing, it is generally produced without the teacher's assistance. That is why, understanding the role of the teacher in the blogging process might contribute to finding a solution to the existing problem related to academic writing.

5.1.4 Research Method

Mixed methods were applied to the present research as both qualitative and quantitative elements have been integrated in the study. Particularly two types of data, i.e. numerical and textual, have been collected. It is believed that 'mixed methods designs arguably contribute to a better understanding of the various phenomena under investigation; while quantitative research is useful towards generalizing research findings, qualitative approaches are particularly valuable in providing in-depth, rich data' (Angouri, 2010: 33).

While dealing with the first focus of the research, two background questionnaires were designed: one for students, the other for teachers. Each questionnaire consists of 28 questions, which are of three types: closed questions, open-ended questions, and multiple choice questions (see Appendices 2 and 3).

While dealing with the second focus of the research, a focus group consisting of 6 students was also organised. At the end of the experimental course, the students forming the focus group were asked to respond to a semi-structured survey. It consisted of 10 questions aiming to elicit further information from the students concerning their perception of using blogs for academic writing tasks. Similarly, its purpose was to discover the way they viewed the teacher in this process. Content analysis was applied to the analysis of this type of data.

Observation was another method adopted throughout the experiment. I kept a journal where I wrote down the students' progress and emotions (how they felt about using blogs and about writing academic tasks). The former was derived from the analysis of their blog posts, the latter from their behaviour during the regular Skype meetings we had during the experiment.

5.2 Research Setting

The research was conducted at Alecu Russo Balti State University. It is a higher education institution in Moldova, located in the northern part of the country. It was founded in 1945 and has gained a solid reputation, particularly in the pedagogical field, and not only. At present, there are 4 faculties at the university. The university is organised around a three – cycle degree system, consisting of Bachelor's Degree (the so-called Licentiate Degree), Master's Degree, and Doctoral Studies. The research itself was conducted at the Faculty of Letters (the former Faculty of Foreign Languages and Literatures), and particularly at the English and German Philology Department (all in all there are 4 departments at the faculty). At the time when the experimental design was conducted the university was going through a process of reforms, which resulted in the change of academic programmes.

The students studying at the Faculty of Letters study two languages. They can choose between English, French, German, and Spanish. Their first language will be the language they are going to major in. Thus, if for example their speciality might be English Language and Literature and French, it implies that the student will major in English, and that their qualification will be that of a teacher of English. It should be noted that more than half of the courses he/she will attend are delivered in English.

In this particular case, the department responsible for the course of study is the English and German Philology Department. This department is responsible for all the classes of English held at the University, and elaborates analytical programmes and curricula for the English courses.

One of the interests was to see if there is a course devoted to developing academic writing skills in the four-year course of study and what its objectives are. However, none of the courses delivered in English was explicitly devoted to academic writing. There was, however, a practical course in Composition but for students studying English as a second choice. Thus, for example, a student majoring in German but studying English as a second choice will have such a course in the second semester of the third year of study; whereas the student majoring in English will have a similar course only in his/her second choice and not in English.

On analysis, it was seen that the process approach was the approach applied to teaching composition. Thus, it was writer-centred, and focusing on the writer and his/her experiences. The students were familiarized with the stages of the writing process, thus the awareness of the

writing process was developed. Attention was also devoted to particular genres, namely those of description, narration, argumentation, and contrast and comparison. Another goal was to get students familiar with particular linking words that would suit each genre separately. Yet, no attention was paid to the academic genre and its particularities. It was not directly related to the students' specific field of study.

Another interesting fact was to discover that out of the 25 consulted curricula (course programmes) for different types of courses held in English, all of them included written assignments. Thus, students were required to write different types of texts, such as reports, essays, and analyses. Yet, there was no time allocated to explaining what exactly such an academic writing task entails. Moreover, the form of the final examination in half of the courses was in written form.

I would like to make a clarification from the very beginning. I do not think that the teachers are to be blamed for the fact that the students are unprepared for writing for academic purposes. Due to time limitations, it is impossible to explain every time what exactly the student should do, how the text should be organized, how ideas should be connected, etc. The problem is to be found in the fact that there is not a separately-taught course that introduces the students to the peculiarities of academic writing. Such a course should be designed taking into consideration the field of interest as well as the disciplines the students are following.

5.2.1 Research Participants

Participants Responding to the Two Background Questionnaires

The 72 participants who accepted to fill in the background questionnaire that aimed to reveal their perspective on acquiring academic writing skills are students in their third and fourth year of study at Alecu Russo Balti State University from Moldova. They are aged between 20 and 25 years old. They are students at the Faculty of Letters, majoring in English. Some of them specialize in teaching English as a foreign language, while the others in translating from English into their mother tongue and vice versa.

The sample is composed of 5 males and 67 females (this is the general gender division characteristic of this faculty). 32 students (20-21 years old) are in their third year of study, 40 students (22-25 years of old) are in their fourth year of study.

The number of years spent studying English as a foreign language differs. Thus, 7 students have been studying English for 3 years, 13 students – for 4 years, 5 students – for 5 years, 4 students – for 6 years, 3 students – for 9 years, 5 students – 10 years, 4 students for 12 years, 11 students – for 13 years, 8 students – for 14 years, and 12 students – for 15 years.

The students study two foreign languages (English and French; English and German; English and Spanish), all majoring in English. During their course of study, they are expected to produce several pieces of writing according to their academic programmes. The most common writings produced by them are: analyses, essays, reports, summaries, and research papers. All of them will write a graduation paper at the end of the fourth year of study, where they are supposed to demonstrate their analytical skills in researching an up-to-date issue related either to teaching English as a foreign language or to translation studies. They are also expected to produce logically-structured papers with valid arguments that will prove their ability to create cohesive and coherent texts following the accepted socio-cultural conventions of the academic community they identify with.

The 15 participants who responded to the background questionnaire that aimed to discover their perspective on teaching academic writing skills are teachers of English. They are university teachers whose average age is 43,93: the youngest is 33, whereas the oldest 68. Consequently, the work experience differs as well, the average is 21,46 years of work experience. All of them are female teachers. They teach various theoretical courses in English, however all of them have taught the so-called practical courses of English. Generally, they ask students to write different types of texts. Some of the respondents are also scientific advisors (i.e. tutors) who guide students to write their graduation papers (for both the first and the second cycles).

Participants Involved in the Focus Group

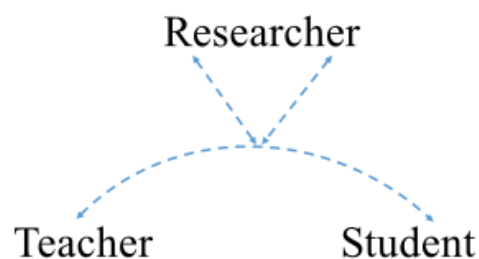
In order to see how students might possibly respond to the use of blogs for academic writing tasks, 6 students out of 20 were selected to closely observe their progress. These students formed the focus group. Several criteria were taken into consideration in the selection process.

Thus, the year of study of the students involved in the experiment was considered first. It was decided that the students' language proficiency level should be intermediate or upper-intermediate. They should understand the importance of academic writing. The students who met these criteria were the senior students in their final year of study.

These students were supposed to be more familiar with the peculiarities of academic writing as they would already have written one course paper by the end of their third year of study. The course paper was a type of research in didactics, particularly in teaching English as a foreign language. So they had already taken the first steps in writing a more serious paper. They were also expected to write their graduation paper by the end of their last year of study. That is why it was assumed that these students might benefit most from the experiment, as the primary purpose was to help them to enhance their academic writing skills.

The next step in the selection process was determined by the relationship teacher-student-researcher which could be graphically depicted in the following way:

Figure 5: Research relationship model



This type of action research did not involve the direct participation of the teachers in the experiment. However, the researcher collaborated with the teachers throughout the experiment. This collaboration basically involved deciding upon the types of writing students should produce. Therefore, the assignments were discussed upon and deadlines set. As seen, both the teachers and the researcher were in contact so that the instruction process proceeded as planned (blogging is expected to facilitate the instruction process).

In this experiment I collaborated with two teachers. One teacher taught the so-called practical course of English. Students are generally required to produce specific types of writing for this course, such as reflective essays, descriptive essays, and text analyses. The other teacher taught a theoretical course. It was decided to focus here on argumentative writing, and thus help them to be prepared for the final examination, which generally consists of a test in which a short argumentative essay on a specific topic is included. The connection with both teachers was kept via email and Skype.

When it comes to the students, they should understand the possible outcomes of the experimental course as well as in what way they might benefit from it. It was assumed that it

would be better in this case if the students knew the researcher, and thus trust him/her. I had the chance to teach various practical courses to the selected group of students. Thus, they knew me personally, and they were familiar with my methods of teaching. In addition, I practiced blogging with these students, only the purpose was different at the time (it was done to boost the students' learner autonomy in their extensive reading). It implied that students were already familiar with how to keep a blog, which could help to save more time.

Another important aspect resided in the fact that I could not be present to assist them whenever they needed. So communication was carried out exclusively online, and the fact that they knew me helped me to establish a rather good working relationship.

It should be mentioned that the total number of students in that group was 20. All of them were invited to participate in the experiment. However, only 16 created blogs and posted their texts from time to time. I decided to focus on a group of 6 students and closely observe their progress.

The selected students gave their consent to participate in the in-depth part of the study without any coercion. They were informed about the potential pedagogical benefits of the experiment. Special emphasis was put on the fact that their participation was entirely voluntary, and that there would be no penalty for them if they declined to take part in the experiment. Similarly, it was guaranteed that all personal information would remain anonymous.

The involved students were females. One student was 21, the others 22 at the time. They were supposed to graduate in the summer of the following year. From my previous experience, I knew that they were diligent and responsible students, who seemed to be motivated to improve their language skills in English whenever they had the occasion. That is why it was assumed that they would be more motivated to take part in the suggested project.

5.2.2 Description of the Experiment

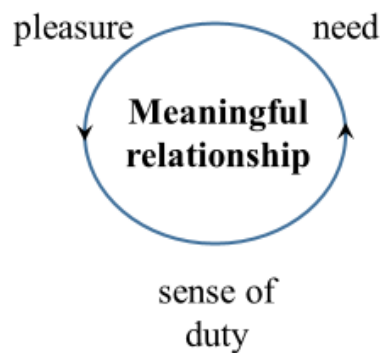
The experiment consisted in discovering whether the use of blogs could contribute to the students' development of academic writing skills. It aimed to find a possible solution to the present problem of students' poor-quality academic writing and suggest a tool that might motivate students to write for academic purposes. Thus, blogging was thought as a potential means that might boost interactivity among students, and create a micro discourse community. In this way, the process of academic writing would cease to be viewed as unidirectional taking

place exclusively between the teacher (i.e. the one who assigns and afterwards grades offering little or no feedback) and the student (i.e. the one who does the assignment).

Writing academic tasks is a compulsory part of the university programme, which is sometimes viewed by the students as tiresome and even insignificant. As there is basically no time allocated to actually explaining what academic writing is and what exactly students are expected to write, the results are sometimes discouraging. They appear to be unmotivated and consequently show little enthusiasm while doing the assigned tasks.

Hence, the need for a motivation model of the didactic interaction appeared. As a result, the teacher-student relationship model suggested by Caon (2006) was considered while designing the experiment.

Figure 6: Teacher-student relationship model



Thus, it was assumed that establishing a meaningful relationship between the subjects involved in the experiment might help to achieve the set goals. In my opinion, the fact that I personally knew the students and the academic setting helped me to motivate the students to take part in the experiment. Similarly, the previously established meaningful relationship when I had been their teacher contributed to capture their interest and involvement.

Establishing a meaningful relationship with the participants also helped to lower the affective filter, which hampers the acquisition process of academic writing skills in this particular case. The idea was to encourage the students to trust themselves more and not to give up if they did not manage to do the assigned task as it was expected from them from the very beginning.

It was assumed that their previous writing experiences might be a major problem as well. On the one hand, their basic knowledge about the writing process in general turned out to be insufficient to do academic writing tasks. On the other, the rather poor results they got for their papers were rather discouraging, and hence their unwillingness to focus on their writing skills. That is why it was important to create a pleasant working atmosphere so that they understood that the writing process takes time, effort, and commitment.

In order to achieve this, I tried to clearly explain the educational principles of the blogging practice and in what way it could contribute to their academic growth. I also pointed out to the fact that blogging could help them to better understand their results as they would see the feedback to their posts immediately. Thus, the process of evaluation would become more transparent and clearer.

The idea was to create the optimal context for the students' writing to take place where they would not feel under pressure and where their needs would be considered. They were also expected to understand the benefits of developing academic writing skills for their future projects, and thus become intrinsically motivated.

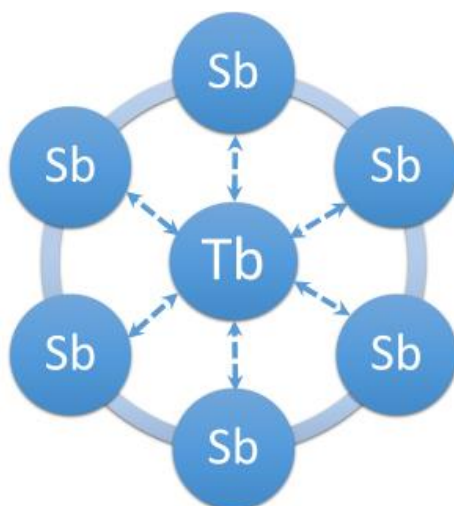
However, when speaking about meaningful relationship, it was not intended to deal only with researcher/teacher-student relationship. The aim also was to help the students to establish a meaningful relationship between themselves, and help them to create a micro-discourse community on whose opinion and feedback they could rely. It was assumed that realising that their ideas would be read not only by the teacher who would grade the papers but also by their peers might motivate them to approach writing more seriously.

5.2.3 Blogging Mechanism

It was thought that blogging would not only contribute to the enhancement of writing skills but would also boost interactivity among students. Being able to review their peers' drafts would develop critical reading skills as well. Students would have to become critics themselves, and suggest improvements to their fellows' written tasks. This might help them to become more self-aware of their own process of writing.

The interaction model used in the experiment is represented in Figure 7.

Figure 7: The interaction model



In the centre there's the teacher's blog (hereafter Tb), where the assignments were posted weekly (see Appendix 4). Students were able to find there other useful information related to academic writing. Tb was also a tool to communicate with students, to get their feedback on certain issues.

It should be pointed out that students were familiar with Tb before the experiment as I used it as a tool to help me in my teaching practice. Students knew they could find some additional information on issues discussed in class and not only. For this particular experiment a new page was created, which was entitled 'The Writing Lab' (see Appendix 5).

As stated, the aim of the experiment was to create the optimal context in which the writing could take place. It was important to make the students feel relaxed and confident. That is why the style in which the short text on the first page was written is informal. It was assumed that sharing the instructor's insecurities about her own writing will help the students understand that writing is an intricate process that requires a lot of effort and is time consuming. They would understand that hesitations, frustrations and insecurities often felt at the beginning should not discourage them. They should not also feel disappointed if they did not get a high score from the very beginning. The intention was to make them realise that by sharing and peer-reviewing their drafts they will improve their academic writing skills.

Two subpages related to The Writing Lab page were created. The first one 'Assignments' (see Appendix 6) was, in its turn, the parent page for the other 12 subpages where the weekly

assignments were posted. It also contains the link to the blog roll created on a google site aiming to help students to get quick access to their peers' blogs.

The second subpage 'Features of academic writing' (see Appendix 7) was created to insert some presentations on Academic Writing I uploaded on SlideShare. It was useful to use SlideShare as it suggests other topic-related presentations to view once the presentation is over. This page also contains two useful links to Purdue online writing lab (particularly to the page devoted to academic writing) and to their YouTube account.

Students, in their turn, were supposed to weekly post their written tasks on the blogs they created for this project (hereafter Sb). They were also asked to give their feedback to their peers' posts. As the process of reviewing involves a lot of time and effort, the students were asked to comment at least one fellow's post weekly. It goes without saying that they could peer comment as many as they wanted but practice has shown that it is important to delineate from the very beginning what is exactly required from them.

A Sb consisted of weekly posts which represented the drafts they were working on. Thus, most of the students have at least 12 posts corresponding to the assignments they were asked to do on Tb. Each post is followed as a rule by feedback given either by a peer or by the instructor. Sometimes students will engage in a small interaction with their peers via comments.

The students were supposed to submit their final version to their teacher only after they have posted two drafts. Feedback would be given to each draft and thus help them to make the necessary improvements. In this way they were expected to understand the complexity of the writing process, and change their superficial attitude towards writing.

In order to help the students to better understand the blogging mechanism it was agreed to have Skype meetings every Wednesday afternoon. It was a possibility to clarify certain points, to ask questions, and to interact. In addition, it was a tool allowing the researcher to observe how the students reacted towards the use of blogs as a means to enhance their academic writing skills.

5.2.4 Writing Objectives and Weekly Assignments

The project was designed for 12 weeks (see Appendix 8), starting from September 4th, 2014 and ending November 23rd, 2014. Every week the students were assigned to complete a new

task. The objectives of the tasks communicate my intentions to the students, i.e. what I think they could achieve by completing the task.

The first week was devoted to explaining what the experiment consisted of. In order to make myself clearer I travelled to my home University and had a face-to-face meeting with the students. I tried to explain the possible outcome of the experiment and how they might benefit from it. I was aware of the fact that some of the students might need assistance while creating a blog. I was allowed to use the computer laboratory of the faculty in order to help students to create their blogs and show how easy it is to make posts and write comments. The intention was to show that keeping a blog does not require technological expertise and that it does not involve much effort and time to maintain it.

It was important to make the students understand that the further interaction would be possible only via the posts and comments they would make or via the Skype meetings programmed for Wednesdays. It was an advantage that they were familiar with my blog which I had used in my former teaching practice. So the idea of blogging was not completely new to them.

The following 11 weeks were devoted exclusively to writing academic tasks. Before writing the weekly objectives, I met the two teachers who had classes with the students involved in the experiment to see what writing tasks they had planned for that semester. My intention was to help the students respond to actual writing tasks, and thus boost their academic progress. Teacher 1 taught the practical course of English, whereas Teacher 2 gave lectures in General Linguistics. Taking into account the objectives for both courses as well as the students' needs I elaborated my own objectives. The planned tasks were divided in three parts.

The first part comprised four weeks, which were introductory. The students were expected to get familiar with the features of academic writing and be able to distinguish it from other types of writing. Thus, they were expected to realize that writing even personal and reflective tasks for academic purposes differs in style and form from writing for other purposes. These tasks were not graded by either teacher and were done only to improve their writing skills, and thus get prepared for the other writing assignments, which were eventually graded.

The second part consisted of Weeks 6 – 10. The tasks were elaborated taking into account the types of writing students were expected to produce in their practical course of English. Their works were graded by Teacher 1.

The third part covered the last two weeks (i.e. Weeks 11 and 12). The assignment was elaborated in collaboration with Teacher 2 who graded the essays at the end. This time, the topic for the essays was related to General Linguistics.

Speaking about the general task division, it is as it follows. Weeks 2 and 3 were devoted to paragraph writing. They were intended to help the students to achieve paragraph unity, and to get familiar with such notions as topic sentence and supporting sentences. The task involved personal and reflective writing needed to express one's perception, feelings, and attitudes towards a concrete issue. Here the students were asked to write about their own expectations for their blogging practice, which they understood as a 'course in academic writing.' The data collected in this period is a valuable source allowing me to see the way they perceive academic writing, on the one hand, and what, in their opinion, is needed in order to improve their academic writing skills.

Weeks 4 and 5 were dedicated to descriptive writing, where the students were asked to produce a 500-word essay describing the features of academic writing. The purpose of this task was again twofold. Apart from determining how well the students could describe the features of academic writing in a cohesive and coherent way, it was also a means to understand whether they were familiar with the basic characteristic of academic writing, and above all, to see whether they could apply the theory in practice, i.e. whether they could produce an appropriate text following the canons of academic writing.

Weeks 6 and 7 were planned for descriptive essay writing on Benefits and Challenges of Students' Internship in Moldovan Schools. The task derived from the previous two writing assignments as the students were supposed to describe their recent internship based on their personal experience and the impressions they shared among themselves. They were expected to demonstrate to what extent they understood how to produce an appropriate text for academic purposes. Thus the attention was focused on the way they formulated the thesis statement and how they achieved paragraph unity.

Weeks 8, 9 and 10 were devoted to analytical writing. Due to the complexity of the written task it was decided to work on it for three weeks. It should be emphasized that the so-called text analysis (particularly of a literary work) is a type of writing included in the curriculum of the practical course of English. It is more complex than interpretative writing as it involves a thorough analysis of the text where a critical approach should be taken. Students should focus on how the writer manages to convey his/her ideas to the reader(s) and on what his/her purposes

are in doing so. I created a discussion page on my blog for Week 8 where the students were asked to tell what, in their opinion, a good text analysis should consist of. The aim was to see whether they knew what the features of this type of writing are. Week 9 was divided in two parts. In the first part the students were given three examples of different analyses and were asked to comment on them. In the second part they were asked to produce the first draft of their own analysis on a short story. In Week 10 they were supposed to write the final draft of the analysis.

Weeks 11 and 12 were planned for argumentative writing. The students were supposed to write a 500-word argumentative essay on a topic in General Linguistics. This type of writing is required for their mid-term evaluation. It is also included in their final examination which is done in the written form. The students were asked to agree or disagree with a quote giving valid arguments that would support their point of view.

5.3 Data Collection and Procedures

In order to find the answer to the research questions, qualitative research methods were used to gather data. I used five methods of data collection as including multiple sources of evidence helps to increase the strength and validity of the study. The used methods comprise: (a) administering background questionnaires using open-ended questions, multiple choice questions where the respondents could choose only one answer, multiple choice questions where the respondents could choose more than one answer, and attitude scale; (b) examining relevant documents revealing the role of academic writing in the instruction process; (c) participants' interviews using semi-structured questions; (d) examining blog entries, analyses of received and given comments; (e) keeping a researcher's journal observing the students' progress.

5.3.1 Background Questionnaires

Two questionnaires were designed for the first focus of the research aiming to determine the role of academic writing in the instruction process. One was prepared for teachers and the other for students. Their responses were analysed in order to describe the root of the existing

problems related to writing for academic purposes in English. It was important to understand the way academic writing is perceived by both teachers and students.

The students' questionnaire (see Appendix 2) consists of 28 questions which could be divided in two main parts. The first part aimed to find out information about their writing habits, behaviours and demographics. The second part was designed to understand the respondents' attitude and beliefs concerning the use of technology as a tool to enhance academic writing skills. In the first part, three types of questions were used: open-ended questions, multiple choice questions where the respondents could choose only one answer, and multiple choice questions where the respondents could choose more than one answer. In the second part, respondents were asked to state their attitude concerning a given statement. Throughout the questionnaire the respondents were also asked to justify their answers, in order to discover their perspective on a concrete issue.

The questionnaire administered to teachers (see Appendix 3) also consisted of 28 questions. The same types of questions have been used while designing this questionnaire. The difference is that in the first case, the respondents were asked to base their answers on their experience of acquiring academic writing skills; whereas in the second, the teachers responded to the questionnaire relying on their instruction practice.

5.3.2 Documents

It was important to examine how academic writing is considered in the context where the research was conducted. That is why I studied the existing curricula and other documents at the department. It allowed me to understand the importance of academic writing in the students' academic development, on the one hand, and the requirements they are expected to comply with while attending the chosen courses. It was a way to understand what their needs might be and elaborate the objectives accordingly.

I examined 25 curricula elaborated at the department, which comprise the short course description, the syllabus, and the forms of evaluation. All the subjects were in English and intended for students majoring in English. Out of 25, 6 curricula were developed for the practical class of English, whereas the others – for theoretical classes.

I also studied 2 undergraduate degree programmes. One was designed for the specialization in English Language and Literature (training EFL teachers); and the other in Modern Languages: Language A (English) and Language B (training translators).

Another examined document was the so-called ‘Regulament intern de elaborare a tezei de licență’, which was developed at the department and comprises the guidelines for writing the graduation research paper. The latter is the most important piece of academic writing students are supposed to produce by the end of the course of study.

5.3.3 Pre – treatment Interviews

Once the focus group was decided upon, I took a semi-structured interview from each student. The interview consists of 9 nine open-ended questions (see Appendix 9). In some cases, during the interview some additional questions were put in when explanation was needed. Interviewing them helped me to draw up the students’ profiles and determine the way they considered academic writing, on the one hand, and how they perceived themselves as academic writers, on the other. It was also a means to understanding their needs and think of possible strategies to apply throughout the experiment. I was also interested in understanding what techniques they thought ineffective in their academic context when it came to teaching academic writing.

5.3.4 Post – treatment Surveys

At the end of the experiment, the students were asked to complete a survey consisting of 10 open-ended questions aiming to enable the respondents to talk more freely on their blogging experience (see Appendix 10). The purpose of the survey was to determine the students’ point of view on the use of parallel blogging as a pedagogical tool to enhance academic writing skills. Particularly, the interest was to understand if in their opinion blogging helped them. It was important to understand how they approached writing as well as the struggles they had come across throughout the experiment. Special emphasis was placed on the way the students responded to receiving feedback from their peers. It was essential to determine if they viewed academic writing as an interactive process, where the text is addressed not only to one reader (i.e. the teacher) but also to other readers, who share the same background knowledge and might engage with them in a dialogue.

5.3.5 Participants' Posts

As stated, the focus group consisted of six students who posted their written assignments and commented each other's posts weekly. As a result, 62 texts were collected and analysed. The aim was to determine if the quality of the students' writing had improved, and thus blogging practice could be said to contribute to the enhancement of their academic writing skills. Their texts represented different types of essays that they were expected to produce for their practical class of English as well as for theoretical courses.

The total number of comments was 137, which were also analysed. The purpose was to discover the nature of the comments and find answers to such questions as: Was the comment critical? What was its primary focus on content or form? It was also important to determine whether the students took their peers' feedback into account while writing their final draft.

It should be mentioned that out of 137, 24 comments were made by students on one of the posts made on Tb. During their 8th week the students were assigned to tell what, in their opinion, a short story analysis should include. In this way it was possible to track whether the students were familiar with the characteristics of this genre. Similarly it helped to understand what approach to writing would be most suitable in this particular case.

5.3.6 Researcher's Field Notes

In order to observe the way blogging practice influenced the students' reaction to the use of blogs for developing academic writing skills, I took notes when reading their posts and comments, as well as during Skype meetings. The field notes were taken while conducting the research as a participant.

The form of the field note was adopted from Creswell's sample of observational protocol (2007: 137). I made two types of notes, i.e. descriptive and reflective. The former tended to describe the students' progress and reactions to the use of blogs as well as their progress, whereas the latter consisted of reflections, sometimes formulated in the form of a question. At the end of the field note I wrote a short summary that would point out the most important ideas (see Appendix 11).

On the back of each sheet I kept a sort of reflective journal where I basically tried to find the answer to such questions as: What was the students' behaviour during the Skype meetings?

What questions did the students have? How did they react to the peers' comments? What are the next steps to be taken? Is blogging for academic purposes helping students to improve their writing skills? What do they learn?

5.4 Data Analysis

The collected data needed to be analysed by taking into account the processes and procedures of qualitative data analysis. This type of analysis is based on an interpretative philosophy where the content of the data is examined in order to explain, understand or describe the investigated phenomenon. The responsibility of the data interpretation lies with the researcher hence the need for more than one source of data for the validation of the results. The analysis was approached inductively, as the gathered data was used to derive the structure of analysis, and not vice versa.

For analysis, I adopted the strategies formulated by Huberman and Miles (1994). In particular, I wrote margin reflective notes in field notes, I summarized the observations from the field notes, I identified categories, which were reduced to patterns and themes, and I counted them. The findings were displayed in tables, charts, and figures. While analysing the collected data, content analysis method was used as 'it combines both the search for rich meanings and a deeper understanding of the topic, together with the ability to carry out some very basic quantitative procedures' (Norton, 2009: 123). The steps taken for the analysis were: coding for themes, looking for patterns, making interpretations, and interpreting the data and making conclusions.

I adopted open coding which consisted of several procedures: explore the data; identify the units of analysis; code for meanings, feelings, and actions; make metaphors for data; experiment with codes; compare and contrast events, actions, and feelings; break codes into subcategories; integrate codes into more inclusive codes; and identify the properties of codes.

In particular, the coding process took place in the following way. As units of analysis I used the information unit suggested by Norton, which 'conveys a single discrete concept, thought or idea, which might be expressed in a single word, a phrase, sentence or even a paragraph or two' (2009: 124). I then constructed categories. At first I read the passages and wrote down the general themes that appeared. The next stage involved a closer reading of the given data and the creation of categories. Each category was assigned a label that would describe it best. Then

categories were merged when necessary and relabelled as themes. Finally I used the most basic form of quantitative analysis to quantify the emerged results.

It should be mentioned that the analysis of the open questions from the questionnaires and interviews were analysed on the hard-copy that is why I used multi-coloured markers to highlight the passages so that they could be identified as corresponding to a concrete theme. Such a passage formed an information unit. I established a list of categories to each question and then grouped the emerging themes. At the end I calculated the percentage of information units that fall into each category. The results were presented in tables and charts.

When examining the students' blogs as well as their comments I also did the coding manually (see Appendix 12). The main purpose was to determine whether their academic writing skills had improved, and that blogging had contributed to their development. The problem, however, arose when I noticed that even if they did not manage to follow all the conventions their writing skills had considerably improved. That is why I created a rubric where the students' writing fell under the categories of 'poor', 'fair', 'good', and 'excellent' (see Appendix 13). Each qualifier was assigned a numerical value in order to allow to measure the students' progress if any. In this way, if the text was believed to be poor, it will get 1, the one assessed as fair – 2, the one assessed as good – 3, and finally the one assessed as excellent – 4. In this way it was possible to trace the students' progress, and present the results in charts and tables.

The rubric consisted of three main categories. The first one was the content category, and it included reasoning and knowledge. In particular, I tried to answer the following questions:

- Is the writing confident and clearly focused?
- Are the reasoning and knowledge appropriate to the audience and purpose?
- Does it communicate knowledge?
- Does it contain relevant evidence?

Another category was labelled organisation. Its aim was to determine the organisational skills the students had applied in their text. In particular I tried to answer such questions as:

- How well did the students manage to structure their text?
- Does it demonstrate evidence of planning and a logical progression of ideas?
- Is there an introduction and a conclusion and thoughtful transitions that convey a sense of unity?

Finally the last category was named style. Here I tried to understand if the rhetorical patterns characteristic of academic writing were followed. I also included here the mechanical skills and grammar norms that should be used for academic purposes. Respectively, the following questions were supposed to be answered:

- Are the sentences clear and effective?
- Are they appropriate for the academic context?
- Is there presence of rich vocabulary?
- Are the tone and the word choice appropriate for the academic context?
- Are there mechanical / grammar errors that hamper the understanding of the text?

I also tried to understand the attitude students had towards the use of blogs for academic writing tasks. That is why I weekly assessed their involvement in the process of blogging as well as their reactions during the Skype conferences. The main purpose was to find the answer to the following questions:

- Do the students meet the deadlines?
- Are they active participants?
- Do they post regularly?
- Are they motivated?
- How do they react to the received comments?

With regard to the comments made by the students, they were separated into two main categories: critical and non-critical. The primary interest was to realise whether the critical comments were related to the form of the writing or to its content. I also wanted to trace whether the students incorporated the suggested improvements in their final draft. It helped to understand if blogging could enhance the academic interaction among students. The received comments were numbered for each participant's blog entry. At the end it was possible to calculate the number of comments received and given by each student.

As the research proceeded, new data emerged and adjustments were made throughout the process. The data collection and analysis for this study were triangulated from multiple data sources and multiple strategies. Combining two or more research strategies allowed the validation of each source against the other and ensured the credibility of the study.

5.5 Researcher's Role

As a researcher I was not independent of my research. Conducting a qualitative research I was involved in the process, trying to be responsive, flexible, adaptive, and a good listener. As said, I was affiliated to that particular academic context before starting the research. I had graduated from the faculty of Foreign Languages and Literatures in 2008, and then worked there as a teacher for 8 years. That is why I was familiar with the socio-cultural context and with the peculiarities of the instructional process at the English and German philology department.

Inevitably my experience first as a student and later on as a teacher impacted the direction of my research. In order to avoid favouring one side over another, I adopted a pragmatic approach as suggested by Dornyei (2007), which involves maintaining an open and flexible frame of mind. I also reflected on the nature of my background influence on my research, and thus minimized the bias I had.

It should be pointed out that my interest in information technology has arisen from the necessity to consider alternative tools that might facilitate the students' learning process. It appears that keeping a blog for educational purposes might help both teachers and students to communicate outside the classroom. Teachers can follow the students' progress via blogs, whereas students can find the necessary information on the teacher's blog. Everybody can engage in a sort of virtual interaction by making comments under specific posts.

I would also like to specify that information technology can be used as an additional tool provided the teacher knows exactly why it is essential to use it and foresees the possible outcomes. If the tool appears ineffective, it would be better to think of other solutions and give up using it. Nowadays there might be the risk of adopting a 'fashionable' tool without actually understanding how and why to use it. That is why only when all the needs are considered and objectives set teachers might decide on whether to use technology as a tool or not.

My belief is that information technology should be viewed not as something replacing the teacher but as something facilitating the communication within the small discourse community consisting of a teacher(s) and students.

5.6 Validity of the Research Findings

As known validation in qualitative research is an attempt to measure the correctness of the results, which are interpreted by the researcher. That is why from the positivist perspective, which emphasizes that validity should be measured with quantifiable data only, qualitative research might seem weak. In order to strengthen the validity of the results, multiple and different sources, and methods are used. Indeed triangulation contributes to the accuracy of the findings as corroborating evidence from different sources permits to shed light on a theme or perspective.

As suggested by Creswell (2007), validation could be seen as a distinct strength of qualitative research as the interpretation is done only if extensive time is spent in the field, which ensures detailed thick descriptions. The closeness of the researcher to the participants in the study also adds to the value of the research results.

In reference to writing with detailed and thick description, it could be regarded as another strength of qualitative research. The researcher describes in detail the setting, participants, the procedures, and the results, so that the readers can transfer the information to their own settings, which might share the same characteristics. They can decide on applying the research findings to their own context. Thus, the results may help to understand other situations.

Chapter 6 :

Results Related to the First Focus of the Research

This chapter reports the findings related to the first focus of the research. In particular, its aim is to reveal the students' perceptions regarding academic writing. In this way it is possible to detect the cause to the existing problem of the students' poor-quality writing.

In order to answer the addressed research questions, the different collected data was analysed. Thus, for this particular purpose I examined the undergraduate degree programmes, the curricula, and the guidelines for writing the graduation research paper elaborated by the department where the research was conducted. This data allows us to draw certain conclusions as to what students are expected to produce throughout their course of study. It also permits us to determine the way students are helped to develop their academic writing skills at the university.

I also analysed the background questionnaires which contributed to revealing the students' perceptions of academic writing, on the one hand, and the teachers' perceptions of the students' acquiring academic writing skills, on the other.

6.1 The Importance of Academic Writing Considered in Context

One of the main objectives was to realize the role academic writing has in the instructional process. The purpose was to discover the importance placed on written assessments in academic classes at all levels, as well as the types of written tasks students are expected to carry out in order to complete the taken courses.

I first analysed the undergraduate degree programmes, which were developed in 2006. I examined the old programmes as the students involved in the experiment were enrolled in these. The programmes were designed for undergraduate students majoring in English and made up of a four-year cycle of study. It implies that a good part of the written assignments were supposed to be done in English. The analysis allowed us to identify the exact number of courses which are taught exclusively in English, those that are taught in in the chosen second language (German, French or Spanish), and those in the mother tongue. The results are displayed in the tables below.

Table 1: Undergraduate degree programme in English Language and Literature⁸

Types of classes	Language of instruction		
	English	Language B	Mother tongue
Theoretical	12	1	14
Practical	9	8	1
Graduation paper	1		

Table 2: Undergraduate degree programme in Modern Languages⁹

Types of classes	Language of instruction		
	English	Language B	Mother tongue
Theoretical	14		12
Practical	12	10	1
Graduation paper	1		

As seen, English is the main language of instruction. Depending on the programme, there are 21 or 26 classes held in English. It should be mentioned that the content and the vocabulary of the classes are adjusted to the students' language proficiency. The process of instruction proceeds from less complex towards more complex language use, in line with the students' academic development. The students, as a rule, have limited or no knowledge of English when entering the University.

Another particularity to consider is that the so-called theoretical classes in the first year are held in the students' mother tongue. The theoretical classes in English are introduced at the beginning of the second year. In this way the students are able to acquire the necessary skills needed for the understanding of a lecture delivered in English. Yet, the degree of complexity of a class in English in the second year differs from that held in the last year of study.

Out of all the classes delivered in English there was none devoted exclusively to academic writing. There were however classes in Stylistics, Theory of grammar, Text interpretation to help the students to improve their writing in general. There was one practical class of English in the fourth year devoted to the semiotics of the literary text and the techniques in developing written expression (the Romanian variant is: 'Semiotica Textului Literar și TES'). The aim of the course was devoted exclusively to artistic literature text interpretation, which is also a type of academic writing in the examined context. Yet the class does not deal with other types of academic writing.

⁸ The specialization in English Language and Literature (training EFL teachers)

⁹ The specialization in Modern Languages: Language A (English) and Language B (training translators)

The further analysis of the curricula helped to identify the written assignments students are supposed to deal with while attending a particular class. A curriculum elaborated at the English and Germanic philology department comprises, as a rule, a short course description, the syllabus, types of assignments, and the forms of evaluation.

A practical class of English aims to develop the students' four macro skills, i.e. speaking, listening, reading, and writing. It should be pointed out that I considered only the part where writing was mentioned (listening, speaking and reading are not the focus here). According to the curricula we analysed, students are required to produce different types of texts for academic purposes. In general, they are supposed to write two types of written assignments: essays and artistic literature analysis (sometimes referred to as text interpretation).

The types of essays differ from one year to another. For example, in the first year of study students need to write descriptive essays. It is assumed that throughout the first year of their study, students are supposed to have acquired the necessary writing skills for the production of this type of essay. Because of the students' low language proficiency, the topics they deal with are not related to academic subjects. For example, they are asked to describe some Moldovan landmarks, their life and personality, their experience as freshmen, etc.

Although there is no clear description of how actually writing is taught to students, I assume that the process approach to writing is used in the instructional process. It is the most suited particularly for reflective and personal types of writing. Thus the focus is on the writer and his/her cognitive processes involved in the writing.

In their second year, students need to write both narrative and descriptive essays. The topics are not related to academic subjects, such as TEFL or translation studies. They are meant to develop the students' individuality as writers in English. Again the emphasis is placed on the writer and his/her cognitive processes.

Apart from essay writing, students also start producing the so-called short-story commentary focusing on particular issues such as the theme of the story, or character description. However, it is difficult to speak in terms of a specific approach adopted in the teaching process. Students are helped to identify the themes of the story, the central idea, the characters and their description. Yet they are not taught how to actually write that commentary. Reference is given to listening to the oral presentation of what they have written at home. This does not help the students' self-confidence as writers because they do not know how to produce a coherent text in written.

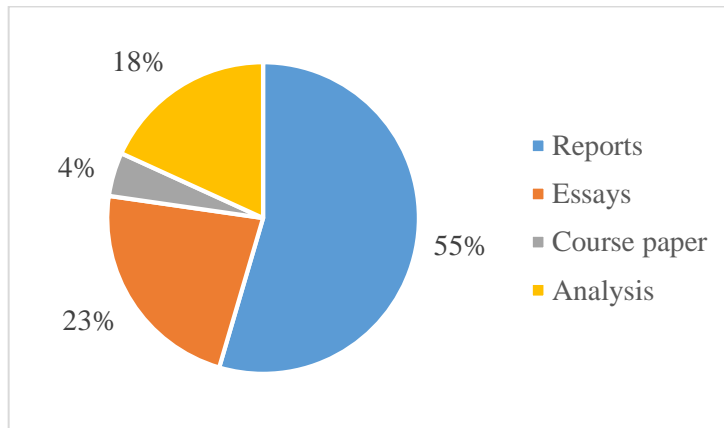
In their third year, students continue to focus on the poetic structure of a literary text. This time they need to produce a more complex analysis. Again, the teacher helps the students to identify the elements of poetic structure, yet, little attention is paid to how to write about it. The students also need to produce a series of descriptive essays, including the compare and contrast essay. It appears that time is not allocated to helping the students to understand how to write this type of essay accurately and appropriately. Hence their writing skills are not enhanced in the instructional process as most of the attention is devoted to developing oral skills.

The curriculum for the final year is exclusively devoted to literary text analysis. The class is also meant to develop techniques in written expression. However, it is not clear what approach is applied in the instructional process. It is clear however what types of essays students need to produce throughout their final year. They are mostly descriptive and focus on the students' personal reflections on certain issues.

I assume that generally little attention is devoted to teaching writing in the practical classes of English. One of the reasons might be that students are supposed to make an oral text interpretation in their final examination, and both teachers and students prefer to focus on developing fluency in speech. As a consequence, writing is somehow left aside. Another reason could be the lack of time to deal with writing in the classroom. Indeed, the number of hours does not seem to be enough to cover all the material. That is why students are assigned to write different types of texts at home with little instruction given on how to do it.

When it comes to theoretical classes taught in English, it should be highlighted that out of the 19 studied curricula we examined, only 5 disciplines do not ask students to produce any type of academic writing. Two classes are taught in the second year, and it is assumed that students might not be prepared to write for academic purposes. The other three are more practical and focus on speciality related issues, i.e. translation exercises or TEFL lesson planning. However, the other analysed disciplines require students to produce quite a number of writing tasks as can be seen in Chart 1.

Chart 1: Writing assignments across disciplines



The analysed curricula show that most writing is asked to be done in the form of a report. However, no time is allocated to explaining how to write that report. The same can be said about essay writing. Students are assigned to write essays without them knowing what exactly is expected of them. These are all discipline-related types of writing, and students need to understand their characteristics, which are different from what is expected from them in their practical classes of English.

With reference to writing a course paper it needs to be pointed out that one lecture in Didactics is devoted to explaining what research must consist of. In particular, the teacher aims to explain the steps to be taken in order to do research. The following topics are briefly explained in that lecture: research methods, literature review, planning research, research elements, research structure, conclusion writing, and the format of the paper. The approach to writing is not mentioned in the curriculum. It can be assumed that students should apply the process approach to writing, as they are not familiar with other approaches.

The curriculum of the course in Text interpretation is devoted exclusively to writing critical essays on literary works, in particular short stories. The course is actually an introduction to literary criticism and explains such approaches to criticism as Russian Formalism, English Practical Criticism, American New Criticism, Structuralism, Post-structuralism and Deconstruction, and Political Reading. During lectures students get acquainted with various critical texts, whereas during the seminars they examine models of critical works produced by acclaimed critics. The assignments they need to do consist in interpreting three short stories from different perspectives, in particular New Critical, Feminist and Marxist criticism.

Although no clear indication regarding the approach adopted is presented, I may assume that it is the genre approach to writing preferred for this class. The students deconstruct an

existing critical review identifying its characteristics, so that while writing their own interpretation they are able to follow the canons of a particular movement in literary theory.

This is the only course that actually helps students to develop writing skills in addition to critical skills. Yet, it is exclusively related to literary theory and does not involve enhancement of other academic writing skills, such as report or essay writing.

Apart from the pieces of writing students are expected to submit throughout the semester, they also need to pass the examinations of the classes they attend. In most cases (i.e. 13 disciplines) students have to take a written examination. This involves the use of writing skills, in particular when they need to write short essays, comments or analyses.

All considered, I assume that students have not developed the necessary academic writing skills for the production of a text in English. Even the short introduction to research paper writing mentioned previously is too general and does not contribute substantially to the enhancement of academic writing skills.

The graduation research paper is the most important academic paper the students are expected to produce at the end of the course of study. It is actually the final examination students have to pass in order to graduate from the University. As seen in Tables 1 and 2, the paper needs to be written in English. It should be devoted to research either in the field of translation studies or EFL teaching and learning. The paper is written under the guidance of a tutor, and should display the various academic competencies the students are expected to have acquired by the end of the fourth year.

In order to help the students to understand what is expected of them, the department has elaborated the guidelines for writing the graduation research paper (the Romanian variant is ‘Regulament intern de elaborare a tezei de licență’). These guidelines list the main parts of a research paper, in particular, introduction, chapters, subchapters, conclusions, appendices, bibliography, and the table of contents. They offer a brief description of what each part should include. Yet, attention is focused on formatting the paper and not so much on the content itself. It is not clear which parts should be devoted to the literature review, research methods, analysis, and discussion. In my opinion, it is a more technical document helping the students to manage their time better. Indeed, a timetable is included, which should be signed by the tutor regularly confirming that the students have met the deadlines of writing different parts of the graduation paper. The guidelines also reveal how the examination will be and what students need to do before and during their research paper discussion.

6.2 Results Related to Research Question 1: Students' Perception of Academic Writing

The aim of Central Research Question 1 was to find the answer to: What is the students' understanding of academic writing?

The qualitative analysis of the first part of the questionnaires (including Question 1 – 10) indicate that overall students have poor knowledge with regards to what academic writing is and what its characteristics are. The findings suggest that university students in Moldova are not competent enough to produce a written text in English appropriate for academic contexts. Consequently they become both less confident and less motivated. This could lead to their unwillingness to develop their writing skills, on the one hand, and to their tendency to approach writing superficially, on the other.

The first question in the questionnaire aimed to determine exactly what students are assigned to write in English for academic purposes. The answers clearly show that students are expected to produce essays, analyses, reports, summaries, and research papers. The students' answers are shown in Chart 2, whereas the teachers' responses are in Chart 3.

Chart 2: Students' responses regarding types of writing they are expected to produce

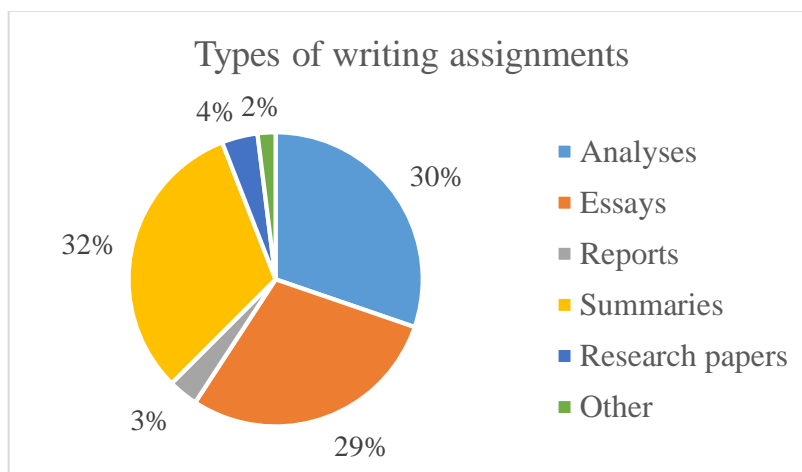
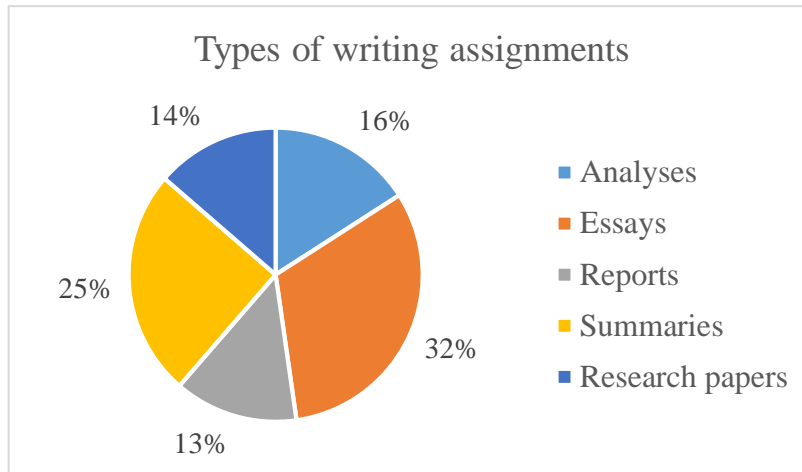


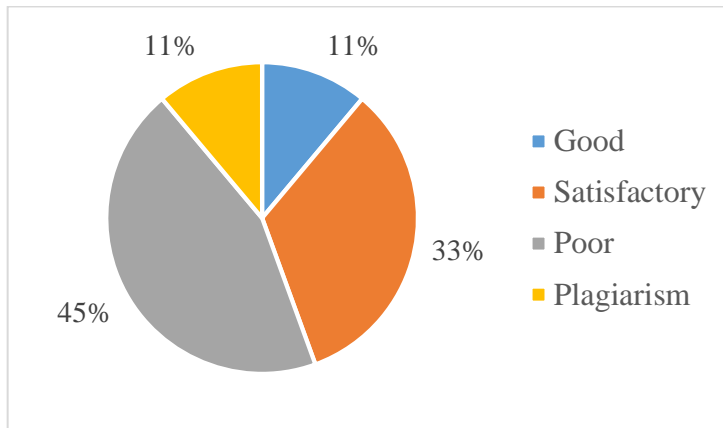
Chart 3: Teachers' responses regarding types of writing students are asked to produce



Considering also the results from Chart 1 it becomes obvious that students are supposed to write different types of assignments in English for their classes; in particular they are assigned to write essays, analyses, and summaries. These would make the most important written assignments students are expected to produce throughout the entire course of study. The different percentages in the results concerning writing reports and research papers is due to the fact that some types of writing students are not supposed to produce on a regular basis, e.g. reports usually are written for theoretical courses, whereas research papers twice (one at the end of the third year, and the other at the end of the fourth year). I would like to specify that that the 2% of other types of writing in Chart 2 stand for grammar exercises, which were believed to be a type of academic writing by three students.

As they are assigned to write quite a number of academic papers, it was important to determine whether the students are able to understand the difference between academic writing and other types of writing. This would indicate how prepared the students are to write for academic purposes. The qualitative analysis of the students' responses to the second question of the questionnaire showed that they are not sufficiently prepared for such a type of assignments. Their answers to 'Say what academic writing is and in what way it differs from other types of writing' were grouped under the categories: good, satisfactory, poor, and plagiarism. To be noted that none of the given answers could be labelled as very good. The results are shown in Chart 4.

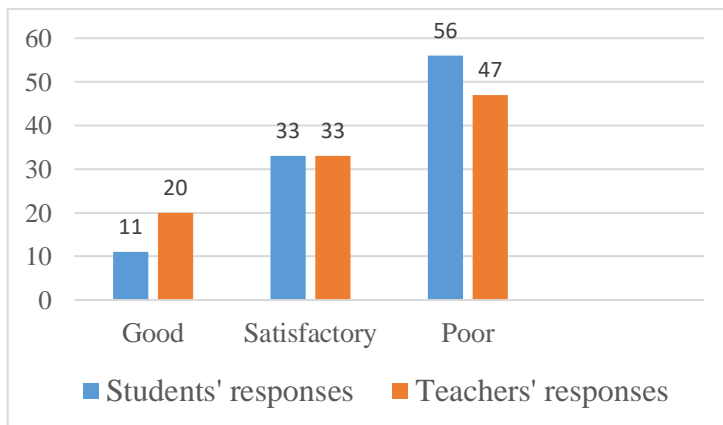
Chart 4: The respondents' understanding of what academic writing is



It appears that 11% of the respondents understand what academic writing is and what it consists of. They mentioned its particular structuring, its formal character, the presence of citations, and the use of specific vocabulary. The other 33% gave satisfactory answers, mentioning either the use of specific terms, or its particular structure. However, 45% were unable to indicate at least one specific feature of academic writing. What came as a surprise was the fact that 11% answered the questions by copying from the internet. Not knowing to tell the peculiarities of academic writing indicates that overall students did not develop the necessary skills to write an academic text.

On the other hand, the teachers were asked to say whether the students understand the difference between academic writing and other types of writing. Three (3) respondents out of 15 firmly stated that the students do understand the characteristics of academic writing, 7 said that they do not, whereas 5 respondents find it difficult to give a categorical answer, they mentioned that it depended on the students.

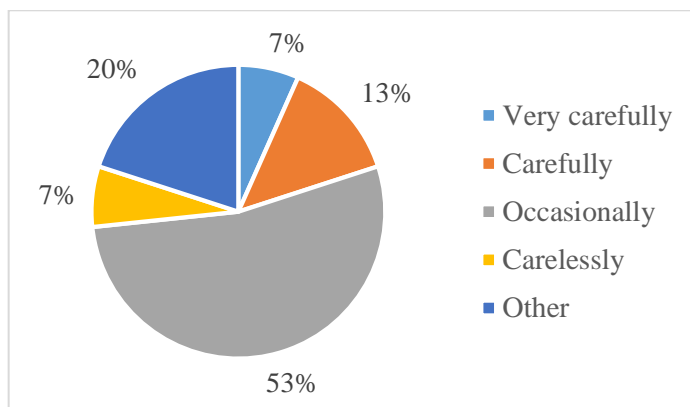
Chart 5: Teachers' and students' responses confronted



In order to understand to what extent the teachers' perception of the students' ability to write for academic purposes coincides with the students' understanding of what academic writing is, I compared the percentage of the results of the students' and teachers' answers, which are shown in Chart 5. These results show that the teachers' and students' answers indicate that overall students are either satisfactorily (33%) or poorly (56%/47%) prepared to produce an appropriate academic text.

The next question (How do students prepare for writing?) intended to see how seriously the students prepare for writing. It is assumed that the more serious the students' attitude is the more aware the students are of the characteristics of academic writing. In the teachers' opinion (53%) students occasionally prepare their writing task, i.e. their attitude is rather superficial. The teachers' answers are shown in Chart 6.

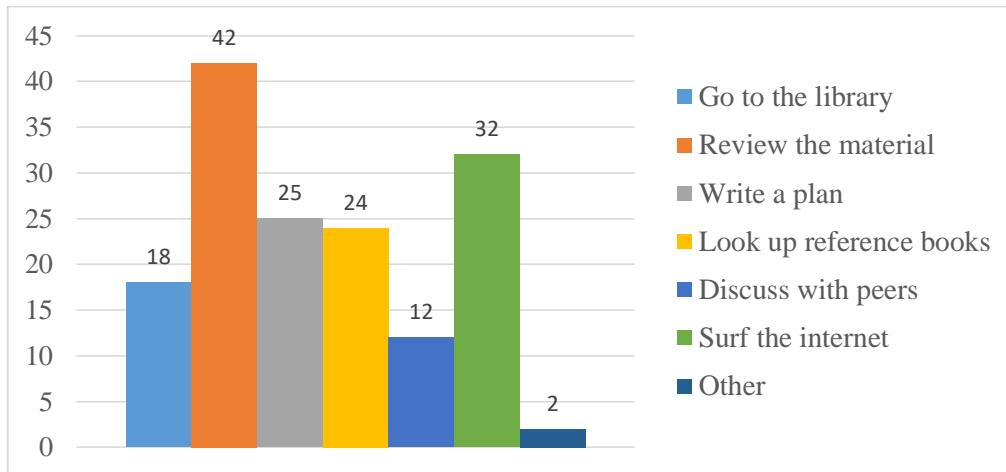
Chart 6: How do students prepare for writing?



When choosing 'other', the teachers specified that the attitude depends on each student individually.

On the other hand the students were given the option to choose more than one answer when asked how they prepare for writing. Their answers indicate that they prefer reviewing the material and surfing the internet above all, whereas going to the library or discussing their writing with peers seem to be their lowest preference. The results can be seen in Chart 7.

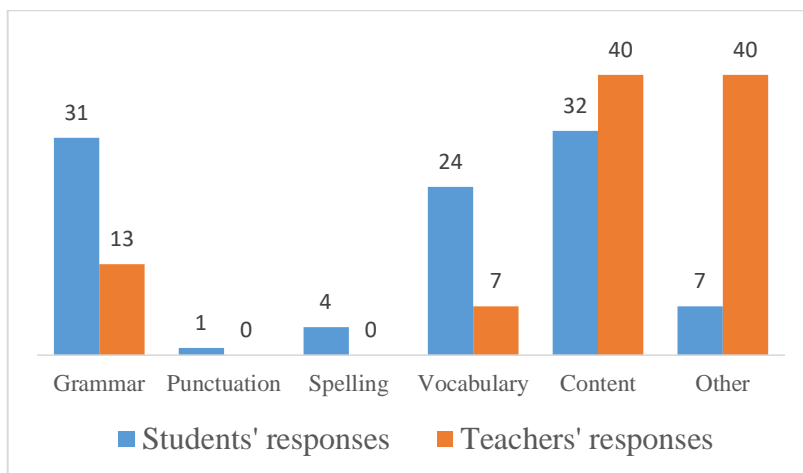
Chart 7: How do you prepare for writing?



The fact that students prefer to review the material and surf the internet before writing suggests that they approach writing superficially, and that the teachers' response that students occasionally prepare for their writing (Cfr. Chart 6) reinforces this idea. It should be emphasized that apart from reviewing the material they covered in the classroom, students use the internet as a resource to help them with their writing. Yet, the fact that they do not generally prefer to discuss their writing with their peers suggests that there is no interactivity within their small discourse community. Probably they do not perceive their peers as potential readers who could help them improve their writing.

Chart 8 reveals the results to the question aiming to detect what students pay most attention to while writing their texts, whereas the teachers while assessing the students' writing.

Chart 8: What do you pay most attention to?



When comparing the percentage of the students' and teachers' responses, it becomes clear that both parties pay most attention to the content of the text (32% of students and 40% of

teachers). Yet, 31% of the respondents among students claimed that grammar, i.e. the form of the work, is the one that counts most in their opinion. It appears that some (24%) prefer to focus on the vocabulary used in their writing. It is interesting to note that teachers opted for the other section, where they specify that depending on the type of writing, they pay attention to various constituents. Only one teacher stated that while assessing academic writing, she pays attention to everything.

With the next question (What do you do to improve your academic writing skills?), I wanted to determine what the best way to enhance academic skills is in the students' and teachers' opinion (Appendix 14). Again, they had the possibility to choose one answer or give their own. As a result, in the teachers' opinion, students enhance academic writing skills if they read a lot (53%), and do many kinds of exercises (27%). 20% of the respondents gave their own suggestions. One of the respondents spoke for the need of a course in academic writing that would help the students to develop their writing skills. The other two believed that making the students write more would enhance their academic writing skills.

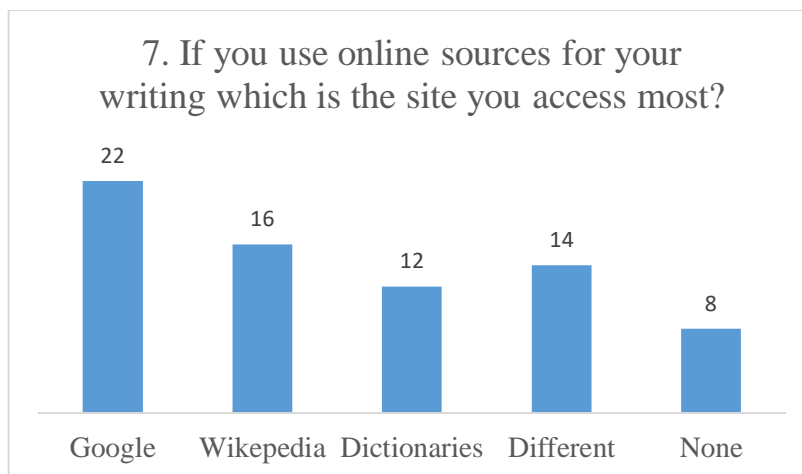
The students' answers showed mostly that they are at a loss. 37% believed that writing could be improved by reading, 18 % by taking notes during their classes, 6% by doing a lot of exercises, 15% by making up sentences with new words, 14% by understanding grammar rules better. 10% of the respondents said they do something else. When asked to specify what exactly they do, they stated that they either do nothing to enhance their writing skills, or something that can complement the process of writing but can hardly improve it (e.g. listen to music).

The above would seem to highlight their rather superficial attitude towards academic writing in general. The students do not seem to have a concrete strategy that would help them to improve their academic writing skills. Moreover, they seem uninterested to do it. An idea which was reinforced while examining the answers to the supplementary question (5.1: Are English books on academic writing available in your University Library?) the students were asked to respond. Its aim was to see whether the students knew whether there are books on academic writing in the library, which could be used to improve their academic writing skills. 57% of the respondents stated that there are such books in the library, whereas 37% stated that they did not know anything about it. 6% claimed that there are no books on academic writing in the university library. Although 57% gave an affirmative answer to the question, it is doubtful whether they consult them because none of the students in the previous question have mentioned that they read books in academic writing to improve their writing skills.

The students were also asked how often they read supplementary materials to help them with their writing. The majority (64%) revealed that they sometimes use other sources. Only 19% of the respondents claimed that they always read supplementary materials. It should be noted that when answering this question, more than half of the teachers (53%) stated that they always encourage students to read extra-material before starting writing. The summary of their answers can be seen in Appendix 15.

The next question aimed to find out whether the respondents were familiar with any internet sites that could help them while writing for academic purposes. In particular, they were asked to name the site they used most. The results (see Chart 9) clearly show none of the students access any sites related to academic writing. They prefer to search for information online, and have no specific site they could go to improve their writing skills. The impression is that they do not think they need to access sites that explain what academic writing is. They use the internet as a resource from where they could take something to insert in their writing. It is interesting to note that they mentioned the search engine Google as the site they use most. The results are shown in Chart 9.

Chart 9: Students' response regarding the sites they use most



It is important to remark that none of the students mentioned Google Scholar, a search engine designed particularly for scholars where all the available online sites related to different academic fields are searched for and listed. We can assume therefore that they are not familiar with it.

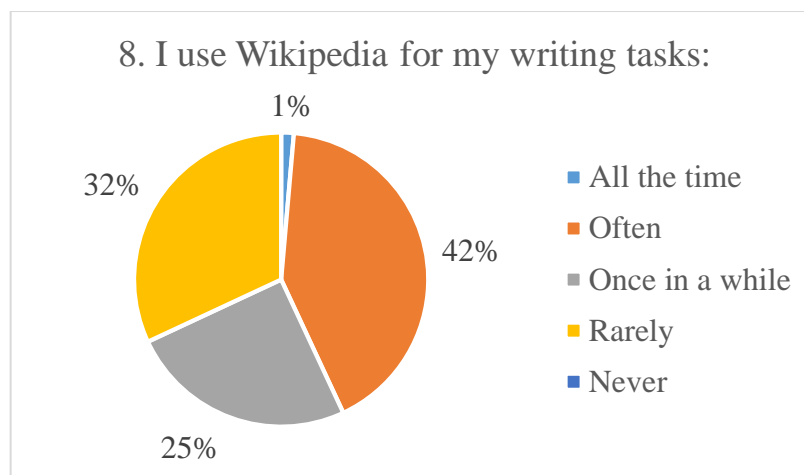
The teachers also found it difficult to name one specific site the students would access the most. The answers they gave were Google, Wikipedia and dictionary.com. One teacher, however, believed that students access the Purdue University Online Writing Lab (OWL) in

order to improve their writing. Another interesting answer stated that the students use the sites ‘where they can copy most of the things’.

The findings show that the students are not technologically literate when it comes to accessing information that is relevant for academic contexts. Drawing on my previous experience I wanted to check the degree of importance attributed to Wikipedia. I often found that the students would simply copy the entire passages from the above mentioned site and present them as reports on specific issues they had been assigned to write. Moreover, while filling in this questionnaire 11% copied their answers, and most of them were taken from Wikipedia (Cfr. Chart 4).

The teachers confirmed the idea that students often rely on Wikipedia (53%). 13% stated that students always use this site, whereas 33% claimed that students use Wikipedia once in a while. None of the teachers said that the students never use this site as a source for their writings. The students’ results are shown in Chart 10.

Chart 10: Students' response regarding the use of Wikipedia as a source in their writing

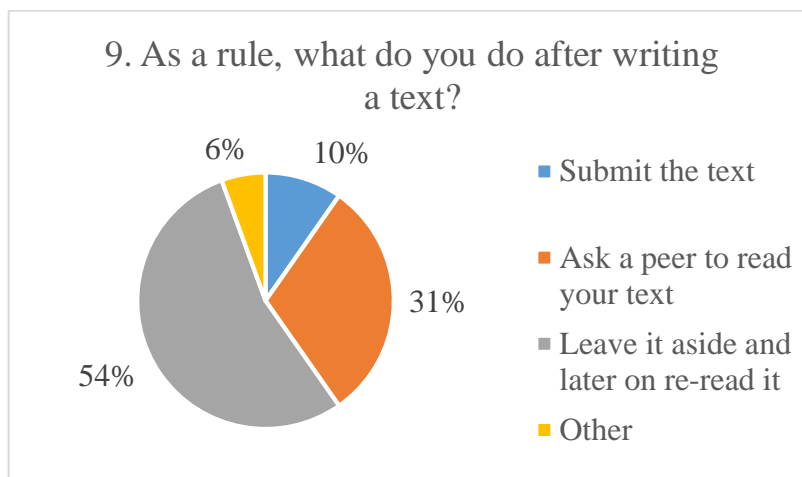


The findings clearly show that Wikipedia is used regularly by the students in their writing. It is our opinion, following Stapleton (2010), that it should be used as a first-stop source. The results however reveal the students’ inability to use appropriate online sources for their assignments. This could be a consequence of their misunderstanding of what academic writing is in general.

In order to determine the students’ understanding of academic writing as a communication process within their small community, I asked them what they do after they finish writing their text (Chart 11). 10% of the respondents admitted that they immediately submit the text, whereas 54% claimed that they leave it a side and re-read it later on before submitting it. Only

31% stated that they would ask a peer to read their text in order to get some feedback. 6% said they did something else (e.g. ‘im reading it many times and im lookinf for mistakes and i make corrections if its need’ / ‘I verify the content once more and the grammatical mistakes’ / ‘revise, correct if necessary and revise again’). However their answers could be considered together with the 54% who leave and re-read the text before submitting it. In particular, the students said they counted on their own ability of reviewing their work.

Chart 11: Students' responses regarding what they do after finishing writing

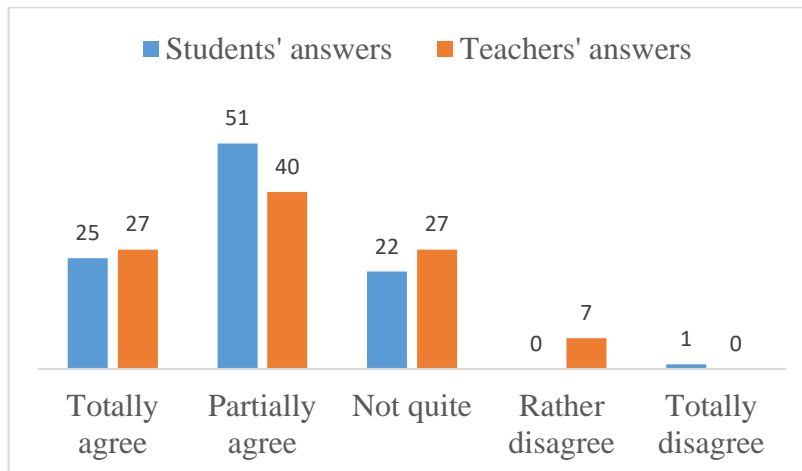


On the other hand, teachers were asked if they encouraged the students to peer read their papers. The teachers positively responded to this procedure. Only 3 teachers out of 15 stated that they did not encourage their students to practice peer reviewing. 6 respondents said that they did encourage and thought that students would benefit from sharing their works and responding to those of their fellows. The others did not give a specific answer. The belief is that teachers are not that sure that peer-reviewing works. It should also be noted that only two of the respondents mentioned that peer reading is also a means of sharing ideas, i.e. of communicating for academic purposes.

Question 10 aimed to detect the students’ and teachers’ attitude concerning academic writing as an act of communication within their small discourse community. In particular, I wanted to understand if academic writing is viewed not only as a student – teacher interaction but also as a student – student interaction. The respondents were asked to state whether they disagree or agree with the statement that academic writing is above all an interaction between the student and the teacher (see Appendix 16).

Chart 12 confronts the answers given by the teachers with those given by the students. I calculated the percentage that could be attributed to each category in order to determine the perception they had concerning academic writing and its communicative purposes.

Chart 12: Academic writing is above all an interaction between the student and the teacher



The findings show that the respondents are inclined to see academic writing as a unilateral act of communication, involving the teacher who assigns a topic and the student who responds to it. In our opinion, this could be a factor demotivating the students to get involved in the process of writing. If the only potential reader is the teacher, the students might not understand the purpose of writing for academic contexts. The writing assignment thus may be viewed only as something that must be done to get a grade and forget about it, and not as something that develops the students' academic education.

6.2.1 Results Related to Subquestion 1.1: Students' Common Difficulties

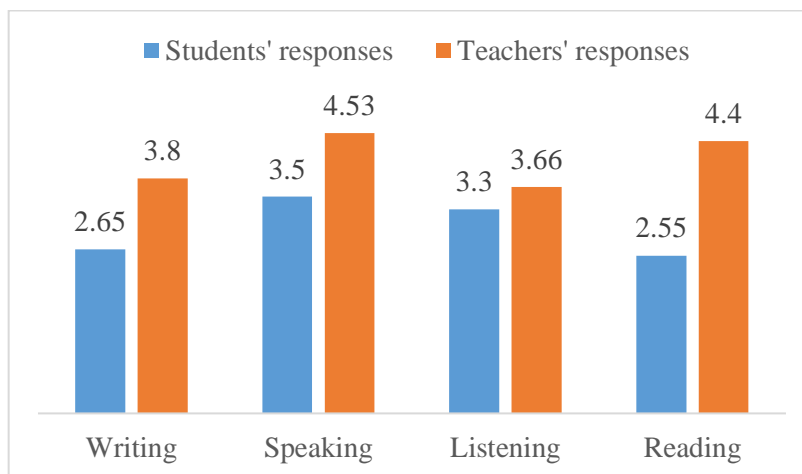
The aim of Subquestion 1 was to find the answer to the question: What are the most common struggles students encounter in the process of writing for academic purposes?

I analysed the answers given by the respondents to the questions, particularly to the second part from Questions 11 - 19. The analysis has shown that struggles may result from the students' erroneous perception about what academic writing is, on the one hand, and from lack of proper preparation for writing for academic purposes. Then I confronted the results with the analysis of the participants' initial posts. In this way it was possible to triangulate the data, and confirm or contest the results.

When asked to range the skills that they thought they had to improve in their present academic context on a five point scale, results reveal that the students do not believe that writing is the skill they need to improve in the first place (see Chart 13). The speaking skills come first, followed by listening skills. Writing skills come third place. In the students' opinion reading is the skill they should focus on least. These results seem to show that the students do not struggle in the process of writing, which contradicts the previous results. Yet, we assume this is due to the fact that they actually do not know what academic writing is. Instead they prefer to focus on what teachers pay most attention to in class (e.g. developing oral skills) and get high scores in it, ignoring somehow the development of writing skills.

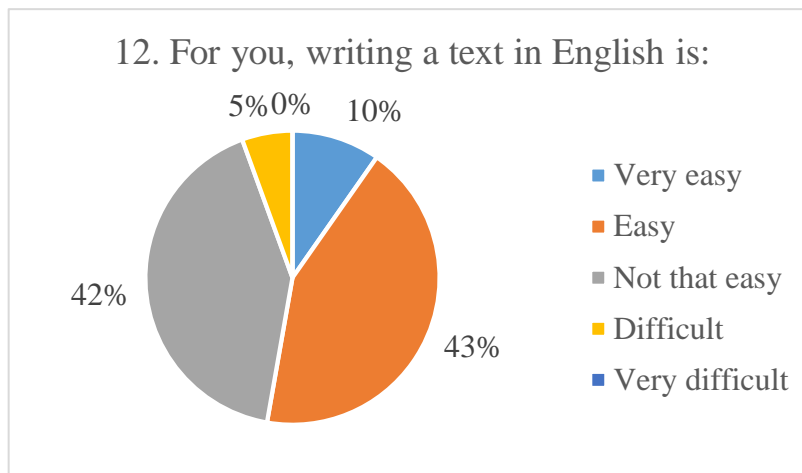
When the teachers were asked to range the skills they focus most in their class on a five point scale, writing also came the third place. The skills the teachers pay most attention to are speaking and reading. Listening comes last in their poll. The results are presented in Chart 13.

Chart 13: Skills to be improved



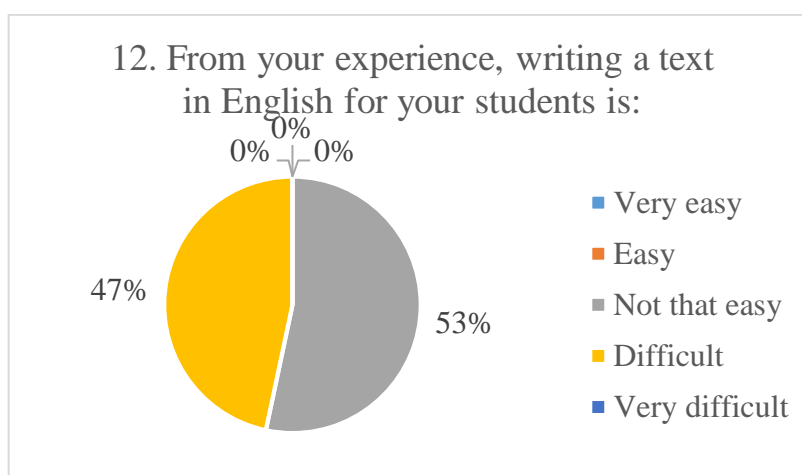
In Question 12 (Chart 14), I wanted to understand whether writing in English is a struggle for the students. It is known that writing in a foreign language involves adhering to a different rhetorical organisation. So the content and form of a text in the foreign language might differ from the one in the mother tongue. The results again show that students do not understand this distinction. Thus, 10% of the respondents claimed that for them writing a text in English is very easy, 43% - easy, 42% - not that easy, and only 6% admitted that it was difficult for them to produce a text in English. It should be noted that none considered that writing in the foreign language is very difficult.

Chart 14: Students' response to how they perceive writing a text in English



The teachers, however, had a different opinion (Chart 15). More than half (53%) believed that for students it is not that easy to write a text in English, and the rest (47%) claimed that it is difficult for them to do it. None of the respondents thought that the process is either very easy or easy. Yet, in the teachers' opinion the process is not very difficult either. The findings prove again the students' lack of awareness about academic writing, in particular when it is done in a foreign language. This could explain their superficial attitude towards academic writing.

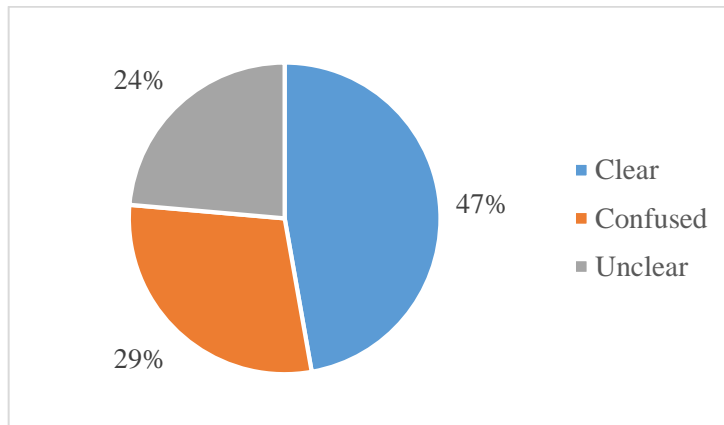
Chart 15: Teachers' responses to whether it is challenging for students to write a text in English



Question 13 (What stages does the academic writing process involve in your personal case?) aimed to elicit information on how writing was approached by both students and teachers. The former were asked to list the stages their writing process involves, while the latter had to say what advice they give to the students to organize the process of writing better. The

students' answers were labelled according to the clarity of their answers. Thus, if they were able to say how their writing process evolves the answers were grouped under the category 'clear', if they could not state exactly the way they approach writing, the answers were labelled as 'confused'. When the students find it difficult to name the stages the answers were categorized as 'unclear'. The results are shown in Chart 16.

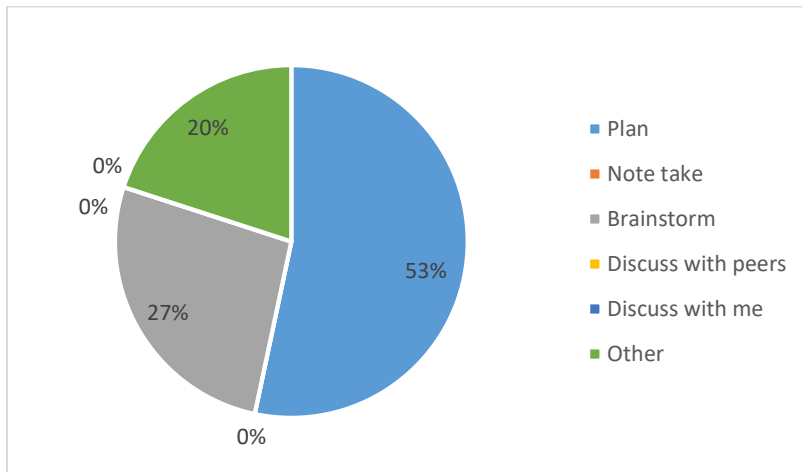
Chart 16: The respondents' understanding of approaching writing



The general assumption I make is that students use the process approach to writing. However, I cannot state that the students are familiar with it as they find it difficult to name the exact cognitive processes involved in the process of writing. Although 47% clearly stated what stages their writing involves their answers were not scholarly. It might happen that they had been taught about the process approach at school, and had acquired the skill of organizing their writing. It could also be that they use the process approach unconsciously. Yet, the conclusion is that organizing their writing is quite problematic for the majority of the students.

The teachers were asked to say what advice they give their students to organize their process of writing better. They were supposed to choose from 5 responses or give their own. The results of their answers are displayed in Chart 17.

Chart 17: Teachers' suggestions to approach writing



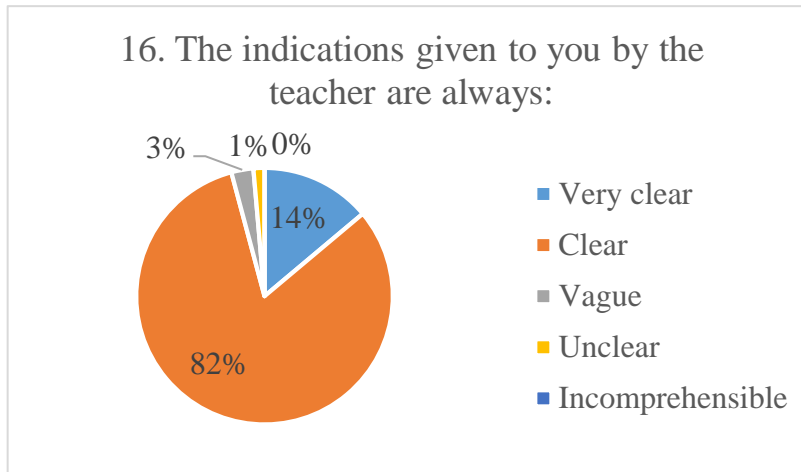
It should be mentioned that the teachers who chose 'other' wrote the stages of the process approach to writing, i.e. they included planning, brainstorming, revising, etc. This leads to the conclusion that these teachers are familiar with the process approach to writing and encourage their students to use it.

When asked directly what the most difficult part to write is, 57% of the students admit that writing the introduction part poses problems for them, 28% said that writing the body is quite challenging, whereas 15% struggle writing the conclusions. In the teachers' opinion, the most difficult part to write for the students are the conclusions (60%). One teacher, however, chooses the other section and specified that the quality of arguments is lacking in the students' writing.

I wanted to see if the instructions the students/teachers find in books are clear for them, and thus do not pose a problem in understanding what is expected from them to write about. It was a way to determine how well they could meet the expectations of their potential readers (i.e. how well they have developed reader awareness). Overall, the students find the instructions in books clear (64%). Yet, 31% believed that the instructions are vague. On the other hand, the majority of the teachers (73%) believed that the instructions are clear. Thus, students do not seem to encounter difficulty in understanding what they should write about.

Question 16 (The indications given to you by the teacher are always: very clear, clear, vague, unclear, incomprehensible) aimed to determine whether the way teachers explain to students their writing assignments poses problems to the latter. Most of the respondents (82%) claimed that the indications given by the teachers are clear (Chart 18).

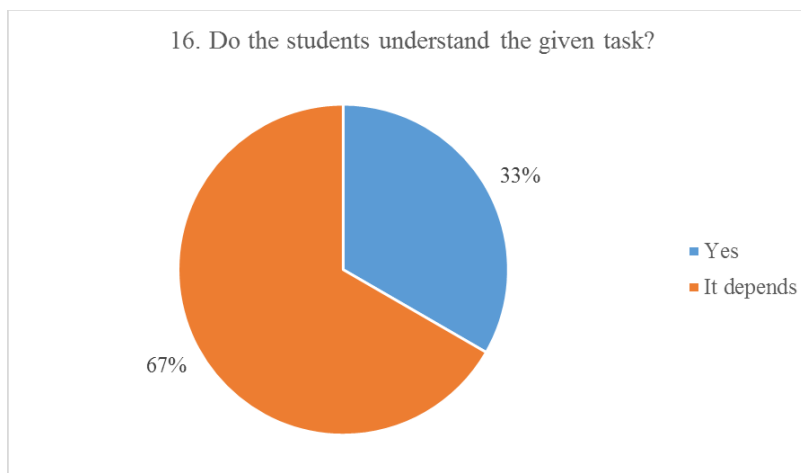
Chart 18: Students' responses regarding the clarity of the teacher's indications



The students appear not to encounter any difficulty in understanding what is expected of them. Yet they still do not manage to produce appropriate texts for academic contexts. This leads us to the conclusion that they do not know how to do it, i.e. their writing skills are not properly developed.

On their part, the teachers were asked if the students understood the given tasks. Their answers showed that overall the students seemed to understand what they must write about. Some admitted that not all of the students manage to understand it. It should be noted that some teachers on reading the students' papers are surprised to see that the students have not understood anything of what they have been told. It also seems that due to lack of time the teachers sometimes do not manage to give the necessary explanations to the students (Chart 19).

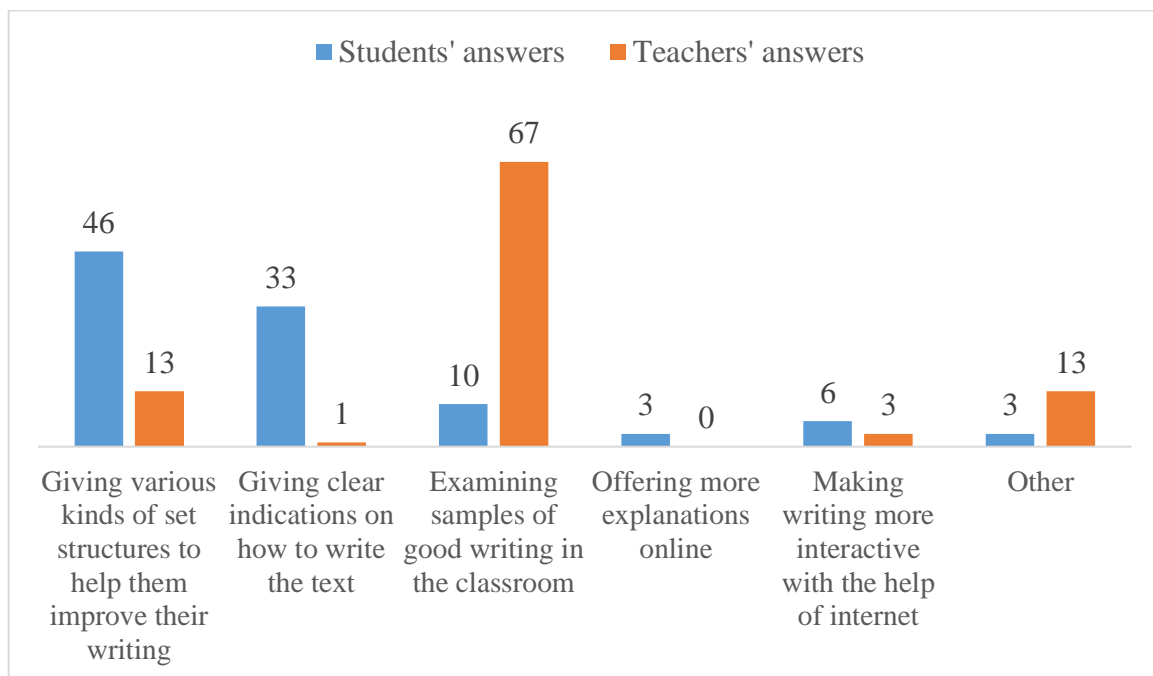
Chart 19: Teachers' responses regarding the students' understanding of what they are expected to write about



Questions 17(Which of the following teaching writing techniques would you like your teacher to use in order to develop your academic writing?) aimed to determine what techniques were used by the teachers to improve the students' academic writing skills. I also wanted to understand what technique would be most helpful from the students' point of view. By comparing the students' and teachers' answers it would be possible to determine whether their viewpoints coincide.

Upon analysis, there seems to be a divergence with regards to which the best technique to improve academic writing skills is. Whereas the teachers believe that examining samples of good writing in the classroom can develop the students' writing skills, then in the students' opinion giving all kinds of set structures as well as giving clear indications on how to write would be most helpful. A comparison of the percentages of the students' and teachers' answers is shown in Chart 20.

Chart 20: Techniques to improve academic writing skills



It might be assumed that in the teachers' opinion the genre approach to writing seems to be most suited for academic contexts. The students' answers seem to indicate however that they would prefer a product approach more. This would seem to show that there is a lack of communication between the teachers and the students, which may result in the students' poor results in writing for academic purposes.

Questions 18 and 19¹⁰ aimed to elicit the way students perceive themselves as academic writers, in particular if they are motivated writers. It is believed that lack of motivation is a cause hampering the development of the students' academic writing skills.

In Question 18 the students were asked to define the word combination 'motivated writer' in an academic context. In Question 19 they were asked to say whether they perceived themselves as motivated writers in their specific academic context. I wanted to understand whether they are aware of the fact that being motivated, in particular intrinsically motivated, is crucial in the writing process. I also assumed that by analysing their definition it would be possible to understand the cause of their difficulties the encounter while writing for academic purposes.

The findings to Question 18 show that 61 respondents (85%) are more or less able to explain what 'motivated writer' means in their opinion. 7 students (10%) admitted that they do not know what it means to be a motivated writer. 4 students (5%) claimed that a motivated writer is a person who is talented, in their opinion the writing skill is not something that can be acquired, but something one is born with.

When it comes to their own perception as writers (Question 19) the students find it difficult to clearly state whether they are motivated or not to write for academic purposes. Analysing their responses we can say that 69% are more inclined to think of themselves as unmotivated, whereas 31% claimed that they are motivated. In both cases the students cannot properly explain the causes. The overall impression from their responses to Question 19, however, is that students do not understand the purpose of academic writing on the one hand, and, the characteristics of this type of writing, on the other.

¹⁰ Question 18: In your opinion, what does the word combination 'motivated writer' mean in an academic context?

Question 19: Are YOU a motivated writer in your academic context? Why? / Why not?

While analysing Question 18 certain themes have emerged which were categorized and grouped in Figure 8. Thus it becomes clear that the majority of the students are aware of what motivation is as well as of the role it plays in the process of writing. In their opinion, a motivated writer is the one who has a purpose to write. Such a person has a goal and works to achieve it.

Figure 8: What makes a writer motivated?

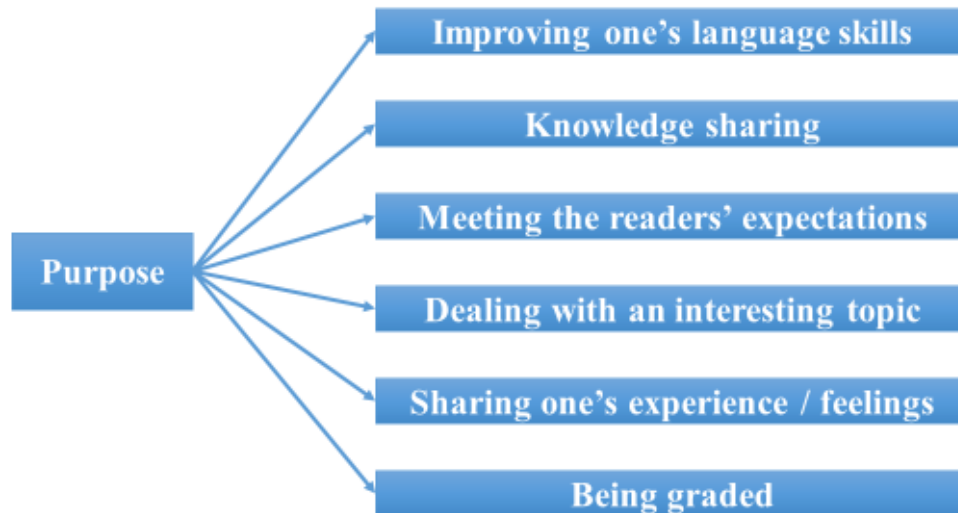


Figure 8 shows that one of the purposes a motivated writer might have is to improve his/her language skills. The students believe that writing for academic purposes helps the writer to better understand the language as a system. In their opinion, writing relates more to language usage and not so much to language use. That might explain why their writing often lacks coherence.

Another purpose is to share knowledge. It implies that a motivated writer contributes his/her knowledge to the already existing knowledge. Yet, in the students' case, it seems to be difficult for them to determine what knowledge to share and what the most appropriate way to do it is.

Students also mentioned meeting the readers' expectations as another factor making writing purposeful. In their opinion arising the readers' interest would motivate the writer more. Yet, it is problematic for students to write something to actually meet the readers' expectations. This happens very often because they do not have the necessary knowledge about how to do it, on the one hand, and about how to determine correctly the expectations, on the other.

Dealing with an interesting topic would also motivate a writer in the students' opinion. Indeed the students' motivation seems to depend on this factor in particular. Yet, they revealed that writing research is not motivating. What motivates them is to write in order to share their own feelings and ideas. So they like writing for personal reasons, but not for academic purposes. These are two types of writing which differ in form and content. The students prefer personal to academic writing because they do not have to follow certain rigours and know more or less what is expected of them.

Finally, the last purpose that might motivate to write is the final grade one receives at the end. As seen from Figure 8 the students are not intrinsically motivated to write for academic purposes. They write because they have to, paying little attention on how to do it, and applying their writing habits for personal writing while writing for academic purposes.

Figure 9 shows that whenever the students want to write something personal they are inspired and find the process pleasurable. This might be because they are not obliged to follow the specific cannons of academic writing (which they are not much familiar with).

Figure 9: Motivating factors in the process of personal writing



Thus in the respondents' opinion a motivated writer is one who is inspired to write. In this case one is not conditioned by the need to realize one's academic goals, but by the need to reveal one's ideas and feelings. In this case, writing becomes a means of self-expression where the form is not as important as in the case of academic writing. It might be that being restricted to follow certain cannons decreases the students' motivation.

On their part, the teachers were asked to say what they do to motivate the students to write for academic purposes (Question 18), and to say whether their students are motivated writers (Question 19).

3 teachers out of 15 stated that they do not do anything to motivate the students. In their opinion, it is not necessary, writing is viewed as part of the curriculum which students have to do. Another 3 teachers believe that choosing topics that might interest the students will be more motivating for them. 2 teachers mentioned that comparing the students' writing with other samples of writing might motivate them to write. Related to this answer is the one stating that

reading the students' best examples in front of the classroom will stimulate their peers to want to achieve the same results. A respondent claims that keeping a journal might motivate the students to write for academic purposes. Another states that by asking the students to present their writing might actually motivate the students to write. Two teachers mentioned praising and grading as motivators. None of the teachers, however, speak about explaining the purpose itself of academic writing, i.e. in what way academic writing can help them not only in their academic education but also in their future career.

It seems that the teachers' procedures are not productive. In Question 19 their responses show that the students are not motivated writers. Thus, 47% affirmed that their students are not motivated to write for academic purposes. 20% claimed that the students are not always motivated. Whereas the rest (33%) say that it depends on the student, i.e. some seem to be motivated whereas the others do not.

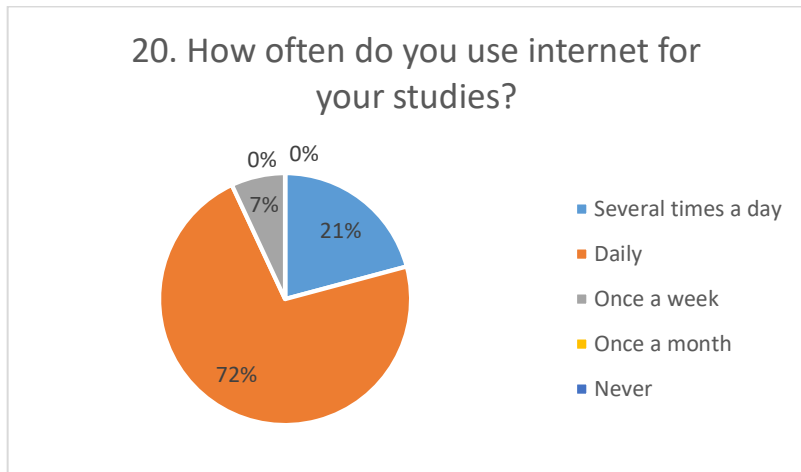
6.2.2 Results Related to Subquestion 1.2: the Impact of the WWW on Student's Writing

As the present study aims to determine whether blogging can be used as a pedagogical tool to enhance the students' academic writing skills, it is important to understand the impact World Wide Web has on the students' writing for academic purposes.

I also wanted to see whether both the students and the teachers are familiar with such notions as blog, and keeping a blog. The remaining questions (20 – 28) in the background questionnaire had the purpose of determining how the respondents would react to the possible use of blogging for their writing practices.

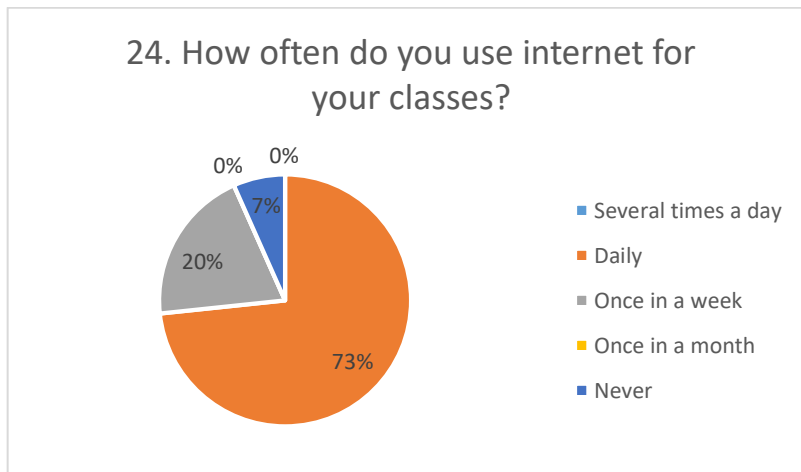
Question 20 (How often do you use internet for your studies: Several times a day / Daily / Once a week / Once a month / Never) aimed to outline the impact the Internet has on the education process nowadays. The respondents were asked to say how often they use internet for academic purposes. The results indicate that the majority of the students use Internet on a regular basis for their studies. 21% claim that they use Internet several times a day, while 72% daily. The rest (7%) claim that they use it once a week (Chart 21).

Chart 21: Students' responses to how often they use internet



As far as regards the teachers (Chart 22), most of them (73%) state that they use Internet daily for their classes. 20% say that they use it once a week, and the remaining 7% state that they never use Internet as a resource that might help in the preparation of their instructional process.

Chart 22: Teachers' responses to how often they use internet



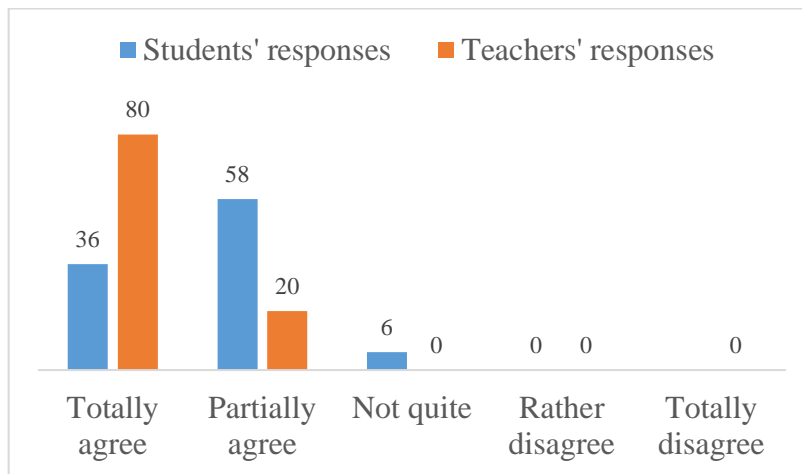
Overall, the findings show that the Internet has become omnipresent in all fields, including education. That is why instructors nowadays need to look for ways of implementing Information and Communication Technology in the curriculum in order to facilitate the students' learning process, including the development of writing skills.

This assumption was confirmed when examining the answers to Question 21, where the respondents showed their attitude towards the use of information technology in order to develop academic writing skills. 72% of the students and 73% of the teachers totally agree with the statement that the development of academic writing skills should include the use of

information technology both inside and outside the classroom. 25% of the students and 27% of the teacher only partially agree with the statement. One student claims that he/she does not quite agree, and one that he/she rather disagrees. It is seen, however, that the majority is in favour of the use of information and communication technology for this particular purpose.

Question 22 asked the respondents to indicate their attitude concerning the statement that technology can help improve the students' writing skills. A comparison of the percentages of the students' and teachers' answers is shown in Chart 23.

Chart 23: Technology can help improve the students' writing skills



As seen, the majority has a favourable attitude. Yet, teachers seemed to be more convinced in the benefits of using technology as a means to improve writing skills. The students' hesitation might result from their lack of experience in using information technology for this particular reason. Yet, their positive attitude indicates that they would be most probably enthusiastic to try it.

The next question (23) asked both the teachers and the students to explain their attitude. Two teachers could not offer any explanation at all. The others mentioned several positive aspects technology could bring in the process of writing.

One positive factor mentioned by the teachers is the fact that the Internet contains a variety of useful resources that can improve the students' writing. For example, the students can access sites dealing with academic writing, they can also read examples of good writing, or they can interact with other writers. So students can find information on how to write, samples of quality writing, and the possibility to interact via the written text. It also seems that information technology is viewed as a way to build a small community where the writers can share their work and learn from each other.

Teachers also mention the fact that technology has become part of life today and this is why it should be integrated into the instructional process. Moreover, it can be used as a tool to motivate the students.

One teacher also expresses her concern regarding the overuse of information technology. Although she does not seem to be against it, she is worried about lack of human contact. This is a bit contradictory, as teachers usually complain that they have no time to explain the characteristics of academic writing.

Teachers also warned against the tendency to plagiarize content on the internet. Hence the importance of explaining how to use information technology to improve writing skills. Indeed, because of the enormous amount of information that can be found on the Internet, it is useful to guide the students in the right direction, and emphasize the ethical issues concerning copyright.

Students speak about information technology as a reality that must now be taken into consideration. It has become part of their lives and they are aware of the impact it has on their daily activities.

Students seemed to be aware of the pitfalls of the Internet. That is why they mentioned that information on how to use information technology to develop academic writing skills is needed. They reveal that they need guidance from the teachers to facilitate the learning process. So they realize that a more serious approach is needed. Indeed, students realize it is impossible to develop writing skills only by using the internet all day long.

Students also claim that a lot of useful information can be found with the help of information technology. They can access sites that can help them to get a better understanding of what academic writing is. They can find samples of good writing and follow it as a model. They mention the great amount of different dictionaries that are helpful to them in the process of writing. Similarly they speak about Auto Correct as a way of improving their writing skills.

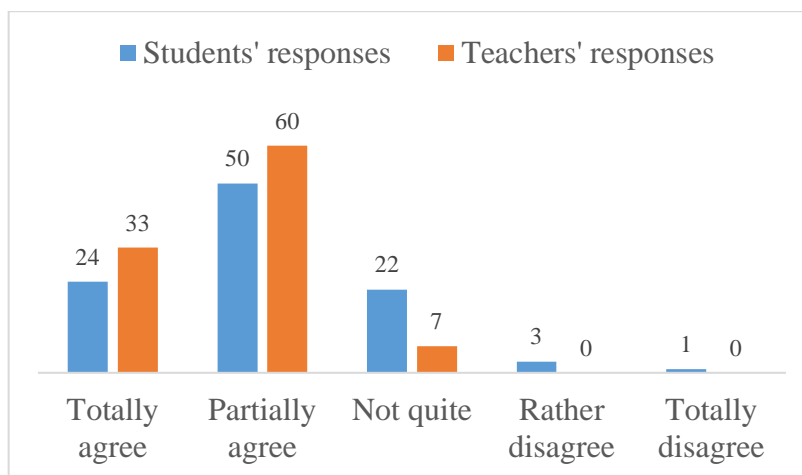
Some students state that information technology can offer the possibility to transform the writing process into an act of interaction. Learning how to write can thus be done by interacting with others. Some believed that in this way they can become more motivated and pay more attention to the form of their work (in particular to grammar).

The findings to Question 23 show that both teachers and students believe that information technology can be used to enhance academic writing skills. However, they find it difficult to

explain how exactly it can be used. The students in particular seem to be more puzzled concerning this issue. They still need the teachers' assistance in order to understand how to make use of technology to improve their writing skills.

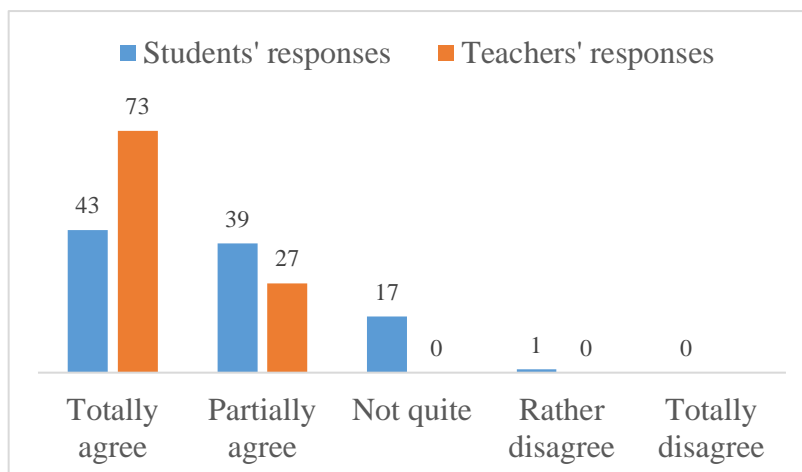
As academic writing is often erroneously viewed as a non-reciprocal act of communication, in Question 24 I wanted to determine the respondents' attitude concerning the statement that posting one's writing online makes the writing process more interactive. The results are shown in Chart 24 and clearly show the respondents' overall positive attitude.

Chart 24: Posting one's writing online makes the writing process more interactive



Question 25 aimed to elicit their perspective on whether posting one's writing online makes the writer more responsible as to the form and contents of his/her writing. The findings are shown in Chart 25.

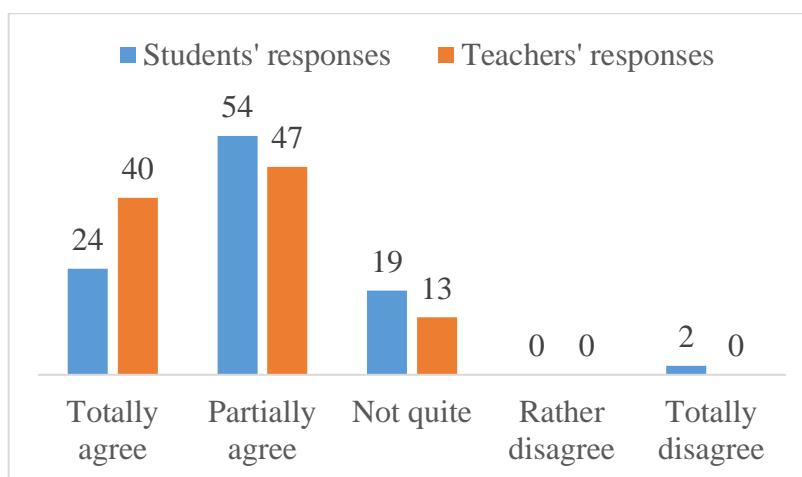
Chart 25: Posting one's writing online makes the writer more responsible as to the form and contents of his/her writing



It seems that teachers agree more with the above-mentioned statement. We can assume that the hesitation demonstrated by the students is most probably due to the fact that they cannot fully understand how the process might evolve. Yet, in general, they also have a positive attitude.

Question 26 aimed to determine the respondents' attitudes towards the statement that posting one's writing online makes the writer consider more the reader's expectations. Again the results show that the respondents overall seem to be in favour with it (Chart 26).

Chart 26: Posting one's writing online makes the writer consider the reader's expectations more



The final questions aimed to understand the respondents' perception of blogging. In question 27 the teachers were asked if they kept a blog. If their answer was affirmative, they were asked to explain what for they kept it. It was a means to determine their possible reaction concerning the integration of this tool into their pedagogical practice.

Out of 15 teachers, only one admitted to keeping a blog. In her opinion it is a good way to share information with students. She believes it is a nice method to teach culture. One respondent claims that it requires too much time and effort to maintain a blog. In addition she affirms she does not have the necessary competencies to use a blog. Another teacher prefers Facebook and emailing as a means of communication with students. We can thus conclude that none of the respondents considers blogging to be a tool to help the students to develop their academic writing skills.

When asked the same question, 25% of the students state that they do keep a blog, 74% that they do not, whereas 1% affirm they have no idea what keeping a blog is. The majority of those who keep a blog state that they use it as a means of sharing their ideas and feelings. So it

represents a sort of an online diary via which they communicate with others. One student confesses that he/she posts poetry on her/his blog. Another created the blog in order to keep in touch with the fans of a TV series she/he is following. 5 of the respondents say that they keep blogs for educational purposes, mostly for posting their homework. Yet, they do not specify what they do exactly.

Chapter 7 :

Results Related to the Second Focus of the Research

This chapter reports the findings related to the second focus of the conducted research. It aims to determine whether parallel blogging can be used as a pedagogical tool to enhance students' academic writing skills in English.

In order to answer the pertinent research questions, the contents of the students' blogs and their comments were examined. For the sake of convenience, we list the research questions related to the second focus of research here:

- Central question 2: Does blogging enhance academic writing skills?
- Subquestion 2.1: How do students respond to the use of blogs for academic writing tasks?
- Subquestion 2.2: What strategies might the teacher apply in order to help the students to improve their academic writing skills?

By analysing the contents of the students' blogs as well as their reactions to the use of blogs during the Skype meetings it was possible to understand whether blogging enhanced the academic writing skills of the students involved in the experiment. Similarly it was possible to determine whether blogging contributed to developing in the students a sense of belonging to a small discourse community. In order to better determine the students' attitudes towards academic writing and the use of blogs for academic writing tasks I described the students' profiles. The data taken from the observations of their progress helped us to see the motivational aspects related to the use of blogging, and the way the students' interactions on a more academic level unfold. It also helped to understand the way they perceive the teacher's role in their process of developing academic writing skills.

7.1 Results Related to Research Question 2: Participants' Profiles

In the paragraphs below I attempt to create the profiles of the participants of the focus group consisting of six students as a description of their profiles contributes to determining whether the use of blogging has helped them to improve their academic writing skills or not. I analysed

the interviews they had given as well as the progress in their writing which they posted on their blogs.

As it was agreed not to reveal the students' identity, I randomly assigned each student a number and described her profile. Their overall performance is presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Students' performance during the experiment

Student	Number of post	Number of received comments	Number of given critical comments	Progress
S1	13	19	27	Steady
S2	10	21	6	Steady
S3	11	20	13	Steady
S4	9	13	7	Steady
S5	9	16	3	Steady
S6	10	24	8	Steady

The figures in Table 3 show that the students' overall performance was good. They steadily progressed in their writing by regularly posting their drafts. Each new post reflected their involvement in the blogging practice. It was seen that they took into consideration the suggestions given either by their peers or by me, and as a result their writing improved. Yet, with regards to peer comments, it becomes clear that not all the students felt comfortable giving critical feedback to their peers (e.g. S2 made comments only to 3 posts).

Student 1: Active aspiring writer

Student 1 (hereafter S1) was one the most active participants in the focus group showing enthusiasm and determination in improving her writing skills. I thought it appropriate to categorize her profile as an active aspiring writer as she was actively involved in the blogging process trying hard to improve her writing skills by both writing her own posts and commenting her peers' blogs. She seemed to be convinced that by reading her peers' posts she would be able to improve her own writing. S1 wanted to develop not only her writing skills but also her critical thinking skills, so necessary for academic writing.

She regularly posted the assignments always punctual in meeting the deadlines. As seen in Table 3, she made 13 posts (she was expected to post 10 posts throughout the experiment). She received 19 comments to her posts and commented 27 posts of her peers. Her writing skills gradually developed. If at the beginning she was extremely self-doubting with a negative frame of mind, by the end she had become more positively oriented. She was the student who needed

to be constantly encouraged not to give up. Being a perfectionist she would take at first the given suggestions as a proof of her failure. Yet, gradually she learned to take criticism positively and seemed to understand that constructive criticism is meant to help her to improve her writing. She was the only student who read all her peers' posts, convinced that it would help her to improve her own writing.

In her interview, she seems to be a shy and hesitant person. When asked what types of writing she is supposed to produce for her academic context, she seemed to be confused. She did not feel confident in stating that the writing she was producing was fit for the academic context.

She stated that she liked writing for academic purposes. Yet, her response shows that she lacks academic writing awareness.

Yes, I like because... Yes I do because we learn many rules of writing, we improve our vocabulary, we improve our grammar because we also use rules of grammar, punctuation and so on¹¹.

As seen, she shifts from using the first person pronoun at the beginning to the inclusive 'we'. This could denote her insecurity as a writer. It could be stated that the only purpose academic writing has for her is to improve her language skills in English. Thus, she writes not to communicate knowledge to a particular audience, but to improve her English, particularly the formal aspect of language (grammar, punctuation, learning new words). Indeed, the fact that she perceived academic writing as a means to improve her vocabulary in English motivated S1 to write. She also admitted being extrinsically motivated by the grades she should receive for her writing.

She was proud of herself when she could share her experience of writing the course paper. She spent a lot of time and effort on conducting her first research. However, she admitted that it was difficult for her as she had little knowledge in the field and felt that she could not connect ideas in a logical and coherent way.

Because I didn't know how to do it. I didn't know some points which I didn't..., which I must follow in writing. I just do it, I just did it by myself...

It seems that she did not have knowledge about how to write. She stated that she had not been given the guidance she needed throughout the process. She had to rely exclusively on her

¹¹ The language of the students is preserved as it was recorded in the interviews.

intuition and on what she thought to be appropriate for her writing. The idea that academic writing is not properly explained is reinforced later on when she admitted to disagreeing with the teacher's methods of teaching academic writing¹². In particular, she said:

Sometimes we are not given the clear instructions ... and ... what we had to do, what we had to write and I would like to see an example of writing, maybe somebody's writing to see different, to see how...

S1 specified that it was difficult for her to write, in particular to connect ideas:

In writing... I need to ... the way of arranging the ideas because when I think about that theme I just put down all the ideas that come to my mind and they aren't always good, and...

It could be seen that she lacks proper vocabulary to explain what exactly causes her difficulties. She intuitively recognizes that she lacks adequate training in the field of academic writing. As she worked so much in writing her research, it is particularly this effort that she graded with a 9. Unfortunately she does not have the necessary background to be able to appropriately assess her own writing, as she later on admitted: 'Because I don't know if it is right or wrong'. Whereas at the end she clearly stated that she did not feel confident and doubted her abilities to write appropriate texts: 'Yes, I don't trust myself. Because I'm not a professional, an author.'

When asked on whose opinion she relies on when it comes to assessing writing she said that she relies on the teacher's opinion. She stated that she gave her writing to her peers as well, but from her answer it can be deduced that she did so in order to check whether there were any grammar mistakes. Thus, the idea that academic writing is not viewed as a means of communication in an academic context is reinforced again. It is viewed exclusively as a means of improving linguistic skills in English.

It becomes clear that the writing skills of S1 are not properly developed. The challenges she met concerned understanding what knowledge to tell and how to tell it coherently.

Student 2: Interested aspiring writer

Student 2 (hereafter S2) seemed to be interested in using blogging to improve her writing skills. Although she considered herself to be an unmotivated writer, she appeared to be curious

¹² It should be specified that the practical class of English is believed to focus on all main skills. It implies that the teacher is supposed to develop academic writing skills during the practical class of English. The purpose was to understand to what degree the students were familiar with the features of academic writing. As stated previously there is no particular course devoted exclusively to academic writing in this particular context.

to try a new tool that would improve her writing skills. She did her assignments weekly, following the suggestions given in the comments section.

As seen in Table 3, S2 made 10 posts as required. She received 21 comments to her posts and commented 6 posts of her peers. She steadily improved her writing skills, showing interest in the process although she was not convinced that writing was a skill she needed to develop at the beginning of the experiment. She was extremely attentive to the remarks she received and positively responded to constructive criticism.

In her interview she was easily able to name the types of writing she considered to be academic. In her opinion, all the writing she had to produce for her classes could be inevitably categorized as academic writing.

She honestly admitted that she did not like writing for academic purposes. It was seen that she found producing a suitably written text challenging. These challenges were disheartening and made the process of writing unpleasant. Moreover, she could not clearly understand the purpose of academic writing.

I don't like writing because it is difficult for me. I think that the oral interaction is the most convenient for me, because writing needs a lot of time, a lot of thinking, and I think that conversation is the most important for studies a language, to study a language, because the written form, we have... can choose in the internet a lot of information, we can browse internet and only to copy paste and introduce in our writing, but I think that conversation is the most basic (aaa) basic, the basic...

As seen, S2 was not familiar with the features of academic writing. She openly admitted that copying something from the internet could be presented as academic writing. She did not seem familiar with the notion of plagiarism and its inappropriateness in an academic context.

The paradox is that although she recognized that her academic writing skills were not properly developed, she did not display much enthusiasm to improve them. She did not believe that she needed to develop her writing skills, although she recognized that it was difficult for her to write. Instead she considered that she should focus exclusively on developing her oral skills. She seemed not to understand the purpose of academic writing and its importance in her academic development and career path.

Motivation was linked exclusively to her personal preferences. If she was assigned to write about something she liked she would be motivated to write, otherwise she considered the whole

process to be boring. She, however, stated that the topics she was assigned to write about at the university were: 'interesting topics to write about, and this motivates me in a way'.

When asked to share the experience of writing her first research paper she confessed that it was very difficult. In particular she stated:

Oh, it was very difficult for me. Because at the university I began to study English and it was difficult for me to write academic writing, which consists of a lot of pages, a lot of information to read about and to introduce in the course paper. And at the library I have read a lot of information, I do not, I didn't understand how to connect the ideas and how to put them into a course paper.

As seen, S2 lacked proper preparation in writing a research paper. She knew that the volume of her work should be considerable, yet she did not know how and what exactly to communicate in her paper. She stated she read a lot of books and browsed the internet searching for the necessary 'information.' Yet, she found it difficult to 'introduce' it in her paper.

When asked to assess herself, she again thought of the enormous amount of work she had to do in order to write her research paper. She thought she deserved a 7 or and 8. It was interesting to note that she did not assess herself in an ascending order. She first thought that she deserved an 8 and then said a 7. This indicates that she was aware of the fact that she was not adequately prepared to write for academic purposes.

When asked what in her opinion needs to be improved the most, she found it difficult to identify the exact problem. This could be a result of lack of knowledge in the field.

The writing itself... because I... sometimes, I do not take into consideration the writing ... ski... the writing... not skills but the writing rules, and I skip them, I... don't manage to... wrote a paragraph using the rules, according to the rules, and it is very dif... writing is very difficult for me, very difficult for me.

She seemed to be aware that she needed to be taught writing in order to improve her writing skills. She believed that it could be achieved by being given 'writing rules'. Like in the case of S1, it appears that students feel the need of being taught structures / patterns of academic writing, which in their opinion might improve their writing skills.

Although she admitted that writing 'was very difficult' and she seemed not to have the necessary skills to produce an academic text, she stated she agreed with her teacher's methods of teaching writing. Yet, she could not name any of the strategies her teacher used:

First of all they begin with the rules, then they do a lot of exercises with the students, and this is the way they improve English, the English language.

It can be seen that S2 believed that by doing ‘a lot of exercises’ the language skills can be improved. However, she spoke about improving the English language in general, and not about improving the writing skills. Again the student’s lack of knowledge about academic writing is evident. Realizing that she was not adequately prepared she admitted that she relied on the teacher’s opinion when it comes to assessing her work. She also admitted that she used to give her peers her texts for them to proofread them. She was aware that her writing was poor and that grammar mistakes were not the most common:

But there are a lot of mistakes ... of connection between sentences ... between the ideas. ... And these are the most ... common mistakes.

As seen, at the end of her interview she again reinforced the idea that she did not know how to tell the knowledge, i.e. how to make a unified whole of her text. This is interlinked with the lack of experience on what knowledge to communicate.

Student 3: Determined aspiring writer

Student 3 (hereafter S3) showed much determination throughout the experiment. Although it was obvious that she encountered various difficulties she would not give up. She always took criticism positively and seemed to be looking for suggestions to improve her writing. She also took notes and made the necessary changes in light of the suggestions she received. She would prefer to be told exactly what to do, and she would follow the instructions precisely.

As seen in Table 3, S3 made 11 posts (one more than required). She received 20 comments to her posts and commented 13 posts of her peers. She also steadily improved her writing skills, being extremely self-organised and disciplined throughout the experiment. She was eager to improve her writing skills and tried to follow all the suggestions.

In her interview, S3 could easily name the type of academic writing she was supposed to produce. She was the second to speak about writing paragraphs for academic purposes. As I later on understood, it was an activity their teacher insisted on doing, yet the purpose of which the students did not quite understand.

When asked if she considered writing for academic purposes a pleasant activity she said:

I like writing but sometimes it is difficult for me and maybe I have lots of mistakes but I try to do my best and in order to write good academic piece of writing... and...

It is the third answer stating that it was difficult for the student to write for academic purposes. And again its cause could be deduced from their lack of knowledge on how to write an appropriate text as well as what knowledge to communicate.

S3 believed herself to be motivated:

Sometimes motivates me to write... when I have the homework: YOU SHOULD WRITE and this motivates me to write, and that's all. I have no other choice [laughs].

Her answers reveal that she was extrinsically motivated. Moreover, she seemed to have a positive attitude in perceiving academic writing as a must. She realized that writing is part of the instructional process and she must do the assignments. She was writing because she had to, and it did not matter whether she liked it or not. She had a well-developed sense of duty.

It should be mentioned that she said that she was also motivated to write for herself. When asked to specify this she mentioned writing down her impressions on a book she had read. That was an activity she liked doing. Yet, she never felt the need to share her writing.

When asked to share her experience of writing the course paper, she said:

My theme was 'Students' role in EFL' and during my internship I make a lot of experiments there, I see which is the pupils' role at the beginning and then I read a lot from Douglas Brown, there was a lot of information about this course paper. Celci-Mercia I read also. And it was in a way difficult to write this academic writing...

I assume that she enjoyed the process of conducting the research. It was writing the research paper that was difficult. This could explain the student's lack of intrinsic motivation. Having little knowledge about how to do it was hampering the writing process. She clearly said that she did not know what to write and how to do it.

Yes, I didn't know what to write. And how arrange the thought in a coherent way. I need some support. Some guidance.

She also admitted that the fact that she was not given proper guidance on the part of her tutor was another challenge she faced. She had to do all the work by herself without knowing whether she was doing the right or the wrong thing.

Yet, S3 seemed to be extremely disciplined and determined to do what she was required to. When asked how she would assess herself, without hesitation she gave herself an 8. It should

be mentioned that S3 like the other students was able to consider the amount of work and effort spent on doing her research but not so much the actual piece of writing itself. She admitted that she did not consider herself a proficient writer and that she had ‘to work a lot to become a proficient writer’.

Although she said that she agreed with her teacher’s methods of teaching writing she was not able to state what exactly she was taught. Yet, she could easily identify her weak point.

Yes, I agree. She always told us how to write, but I have a problem with the topic sentence, and I never can formulate it. And always it is wrong. I think. But sometimes it was good. Not always [laughs].

She admitted having problems in writing logically connected sentences. Her work often lacked unity. She seemed to be open to criticism as she claimed to give her work to her peers to read and to get feedback. It seems that they used to email their pieces of writing to each other and comment upon them.

I would like to mention that she was extremely relaxed throughout the interview. She expressed her point of view in a friendly way, often laughing. She was not afraid to admit that she was far from perfect and seemed to realize that she had a lot of work to do in order to improve her academic writing skills.

Student 4: Disoriented aspiring writer

Student 4 (hereafter S4) was one who seemed not to take her work very seriously, yet aspired to be acknowledged as a good writer. Yet, throughout the experiment it became evident she was in fact confused and was constantly trying to understand what exactly she was expected to do. That is why I thought it appropriate to categorize her as a disoriented aspiring writer.

The main problem was that it was difficult for her to realize that the feedback she received was meant to improve her writing skills but not to criticize her. She would often use such phrases as ‘I failed’, ‘Again I failed’. She constantly needed to be reminded that it had nothing to do with failure and that it was normal to make mistakes. She worked rather well, and succeeded in better understanding what academic writing is.

As seen in Table 3, she made 9 posts, one less than required. She received 13 comments to her posts and commented 7 posts of her peers. The small number of comments she made could indicate that she doubted her writing abilities and felt too insecure to comment her peers’ posts. Like S1, she gradually learned to take criticism positively. Her progress was steady.

In her interview she claimed that she liked writing for academic purposes. Yet when asked to explain her answer it became clear that she did not quite understand the purpose of this type of writing.

Because it improve my writing skills, and my memory, by writing I remember some words how they are... how they are... write correct and sometimes I... when I write I remember better some difficult words or some new words and it helps me to improve my writing skills.

As seen, she believes that the purpose of academic writing is to learn new vocabulary. Again, the students' tendency to view writing as a means of enriching their vocabulary, and as a consequence to improve their speaking skills must be noticed. While writing they do not think about communicating something, but rather about learning some new words in English.

She was aware of the importance motivation plays in the writing process. She considered that in order to motivate a student, he/she should be given an interesting topic to write about. She added:

Yes, because when you are motivated you know what to write, how to write, and there are more ideas, but when you are not interested or you don't know the topic, how can you write?

It came as a surprise to notice that she believed that being motivated was enough to produce a valuable piece of writing. It seems that she did not need to know the features of academic writing, its purpose, as long as she was motivated.

While sharing her experience of writing the course paper she seemed to be enthusiastic:

Oh, it was very dif... very interesting for me. Because that was the first time when I wrote such academic writing... because before we wrote only some essays, some... but it was very... so... It had to be coherent, some strict rules, some strong ideas, and strong arguments, and it was... at the first sight it was... and... both difficult and interesting.

Yet, her confusion could be noticed from the very beginning. At first she wanted to say that it was difficult to write the course paper. Yet, she preferred to focus on the positive aspect and said that it was interesting. It becomes obvious that she enjoyed the process of conducting research. Yet, writing on it was challenging. That is why at the end she concluded that it was both difficult and interesting.

She reinforced this idea when she admitted that:

Because nobody gives us some examples maybe, or ... they only give us some hints ... how to write... So you should write this, in the first

paragraph theory, in the second - some... about practice, some principle, some... also the basics, and in the third our experience... what the experiment... what we had ...

It is noticeable that she used the inclusive 'we' when being asked why it was difficult for her to write. So she acknowledges membership of a small academic community consisting of students like herself. It implies that they most probably discussed among themselves the challenges they faced. They shared their experience but they did not share their writing.

Her answer also reveals her confusion about what academic writing is. She had some basic knowledge, but she did not seem to understand what exactly she was supposed to do. Yet she was positive, believing that it would be easier for her to write her graduation paper. She believed that her experience of writing the course paper would help her to write the graduation paper. She did not seem to be aware that she needed to actually improve her academic writing skills.

She was hesitant in self-assessing her own writing. She hesitated between grades 7 and 8. Again, it was the effort that was taken into consideration but not the final product. To be noticed that again students believed that it is the effort that should be assessed above all.

When asked if she considered herself to be a proficient writer she did not hesitate at all. She said that she was not. Yet, she found it difficult to clearly explain why.

Because ... my language is not so ... brilliant. I don't know how... as much as I think I should know at this very moment to write such a research ... concerning this topic and... and...

S4 however seemed to be aware that her academic writing skills were not properly developed.

I have to improve my reading skills because I hate this one... because there are... when, for example, concerning my course paper, there is a lot of information that I have to read and to find the most important things, but if I have only, ... for example, one source has ten pages ... and it took a lot of time to me to read and to find out the most important ideas that I have to include... but not word by word, but to think, to change it...

She realized the importance of reading, in particular close reading, in the development of academic writing skills. Her answer also reveals that she found it difficult to delineate what knowledge she should communicate. She was also aware of the fact that academic writing involves particular techniques she did not seem to be familiar with (e.g. she could not name paraphrasing).

S4 was basically the only student who openly criticizes the teacher's methods of teaching writing.

No. I think it's not good. Because... we have ... if we have to write something, for example an essay, we all write, we come to the lesson, and then it... the teacher takes one piece of writing and starts to analyse and... Every time it is bad, and we have to rewrite it... five or six times, and ... at last it's also not so good as the teacher wants.
When the topic is given there are some... some... as a plan... write this or this or this, and when it comes the plan is changed, and we don't know how to do this and how to write, because... at the end of the lesson there is a plan, and at the next lesson there is another one. And it's like... it changes... today is... it depends on the mood of the teacher: today is like this and the next time you have the other things.

It appears that the teacher's methods confused her. She could not understand exactly what was expected not only from her but from her peers as well. She again used the inclusive 'we', meaning that all the students from her group felt the same frustration. She also made an indirect hint that the teacher's behaviour was unprofessional as the way the lesson would proceed depended 'on the mood of the teacher'.

She later on confirmed the idea that they form a small discourse-community where they discuss their frustration.

And it's not for me personal but to all. When I discuss with others they also don't know clearly what we have to do. You have to do this, this, this. But there is no clear indication.

As far as I could understand the biggest problem was that she could not clearly understand what was incorrect in her writing and what exactly she should do to improve her writing skills. In her opinion, the teacher would simply change some words but the meaning of a sentence would be the same as what she had written. Thus she believed that she did the same thing only expressed herself differently. She did not think that she made any mistakes.

Yet, when asked on whose opinion she relies when it comes to assessing writing, S4 stated that she relied on the teachers' opinion. Yet, she immediately said that she consulted her peers as well.

Opinion? For sure, I rely on half of my ... teachers, because the teacher give this and say some hints: this, this, and this. But then when I write I discuss with my friends, my colleagues what they have write.... written... and what I did. And we compare, we discuss this.

It was interesting to note that she would not rely on everybody's opinion from her group. It could be seen that a number of students had formed a small group where they shared their writing and tried to give suggestions to improve it. She admitted:

You think it's perfect but when somebody reads it, they don't understand. And show this is... here write this, and other things.

Although she seemed to be the most confused of all the interviewees she was the only one to realize the importance of sharing one's writing. Yet, it could be seen that her primary purpose was to improve her writing but not to share knowledge.

Student 5: Creative aspiring writer

Student 5 (hereafter S5) was a blogger. She kept another blog for personal reasons, particularly to affiliate to a community consisting of fans of a TV series. She was serious and seemed to want to improve her academic writing skills. She was extremely creative, i.e. she had the tendency to use metaphorical language all the time. For her writing for academic purposes was not very different from writing a short story. This was her biggest challenge as she was almost constantly reminded that she must avoid overly metaphorical language when writing for academic purposes.

As seen in Table 3, S5 made 9 posts (one less than required). She received 16 comments to her posts and commented 3 posts of her peers. It was clear that she did her best to improve her writing skills. The fact that she posted less than others does not necessarily indicate that she was uninterested. She needed more time to think it over. Also she did not feel confident in writing critical comments to her peers' posts. I would also like to mention that she encountered technological problems (i.e. as the students were free to create blogs where they wanted, sometimes leaving their comments to their peers' posts caused problems).

She easily named the types of writing she was supposed to produce for her academic context. When asked if she liked writing for academic purposes, S5 said that it depended on the task, in particular on the topic she had write about. As she was interested in literature, her course paper which dealt with literature seemed to interest her.

It was interesting to notice her reaction when she was asked if she was a motivated writer. She needed some time to think it over, and admitted that she had never thought about it. She said:

Honestly, because I have to write. What I write for me is not connected with homework. I write for me, for fans of a serial. I'm a fan myself and I like to write about it. To invent.

It could be seen that she did not find the process of writing for academic purposes very enjoyable. Instead she liked writing for personal purposes. It became clear from the very beginning that her writing was more creative, with her tendency to use language more linked to literary works.

Just as in the previous cases, S5 confessed that she liked the process of conducting a research. Yet, it was difficult to write the paper itself. She admitted:

Not only because of the material, it was difficult to organize this writing. To put it down. To write it. To organize things: what comes after what.

She later on would come back to this by actually stating that she had problems mostly with arranging her ideas in a coherent way.

When asked to assess her own work she believed she deserved an 8. In my opinion, it was the effort that was mostly assessed in her case as well. Knowing that she worked really hard, she thought it appropriate to assess her work with an 8.

She was extremely reserved when asked about the teacher's methods of teaching academic writing. She actually could not state her opinion on the matter.

S5 said that she relied on her teacher's opinion when it came to assessing writing. She also added that she trusted her colleagues' opinion. She admitted that she might have some doubts regarding the way she had been assessed. Yet she believed she could not do anything about it: 'I doubt but I can't do anything'.

She avoided answering why she could not do anything. Instead she said: 'When it's good is good, when it's not good I try to correct it'.

She also stated that her colleagues do not find mistakes in her writing. I suggested that that would make her a proficient writer. She disagreed being aware that she had to study to become one.

Student 6: Questioning aspiring writer

Student 6 (hereafter S6) was determined to improve her writing skills. In my opinion, her personality was similar to S3. Yet, her language proficiency was higher and as a consequence

she would always question whether the remarks she had been given were right. This reveals that she did not blindly follow the advice she received. That is why I thought it appropriate to categorize her as a questioning aspiring writer. Sometimes she would refuse to accept when she was wrong. She would try instead to find justifications for what she had written. Yet, she managed to realize that critical criticism was only for her good. And she was always encouraged to keep questioning.

As seen in Table 3, S6 made 10 posts. She received 24 comments to her posts and commented 8 posts of her peers. She also steadily improved her writing skills, always posting her drafts on time. She was confident that she would improve her writing skills.

In her interview she listed the types of writing she was supposed to produce for her academic context. It was interesting to notice her reaction when asked if she liked writing for academic purposes. Although she said that she did, she admitted writing only because she had to.

Because we get marks for that [laughs], and it's motivating in a way, because we learn the language with the help of this academic writing.

Thus she was extrinsically motivated and perceived academic writing as a must. Then she admitted that writing helped her to improve her language proficiency. It can be seen again that the purpose of academic writing was not clear to her. Like the other students, she saw in it a means for learning English.

Her answer concerning writing her course paper, was similar to that of her peers. She enjoyed the process of conducting the research itself. It seems it was difficult to understand that conducting the research is different from writing it down.

It was an interesting thing because I was supposed in the same way to gather theoretical material and to apply it, and to work with children, ... and this was very interesting, because when you do this thing you understand better what you do.

She admitted that writing was actually not that easy. She said in particular that she lacked experience ('It's the first time') and this made the writing process 'a little bit confusing'. Like the others she found it difficult to organise her work. She also mentioned that she did not receive much guidance from her tutor. While answering the question I got the feeling that she was afraid to confess that she might be wrong or do something wrong. She seemed to be a perfectionist who constantly looked for appraisal.

This might explain the fact that she was the only one to assess her work with a 9 (I would like to mention that her language proficiency was basically the same as that of S1, S2, S4, and S5). She seemed to have the need to justify herself by saying: ‘Not a 10 but a 9. Because I worked a lot...’

Like all her student fellow students she actually assessed the amount of work done. She was not able to actually assess her writing. It became clear that she lacked background knowledge on what academic writing is. She could not explain what exactly caused her difficulty:

Maybe to have that scheme in the memory. I do this think, but I have to do this many times to improve my...

The scheme she later explained as the parts a text should consist of, in particular she said: ‘The beginning and ... the body... and the ending’. She admitted having problems in formulating the topic sentence, which would be followed by logically connected supporting sentences. Again it can be seen that students struggle to achieve unity in their work.

When asked if she agreed with her teacher’s methods of teaching writing for academic purposes she avoided giving a straight answer. Yet, in her opinion ‘it could be better’. She explained:

We did not focus a lot on the writing, we wrote but with cards, with things... about the parts of a bicycle... we didn’t pay many att.... a lot of attention to writing itself

However, she relies on the teacher’s opinion when it comes to assessing writing. She laughed while giving her answer as she realized she had been criticising previously the teacher’s methods. Yet, she specified that she relied in general on the teachers’ opinion, not on one particular teacher’s. She could not clearly define why she relied on the teachers’ opinion.

Because they know better, they studies about it, they teach it and when you teach it you could understand better what ... how to do it.

It can be deduced that S6 like her colleagues was rather confused. Its cause could derive from the fact that they lack knowledge in the field of academic writing.

She admitted that she seldom relied on her peers’ opinions when it comes to commenting on her writing. Yet she used to ask S1 to give her some feedback. She stated that she would always get corrections: ‘S1 always does [laughs]. She always finds something’. She mentioned that most mistakes she made were grammar mistakes. Yet, when mentioning content issues, S6

said: ‘She asks me and I explain’. Indeed, S6 had the tendency to explain her writing. Somehow she could not understand at the beginning that if the content was not clear she should think of rewriting it. Yet, she managed to understand throughout the experiment and always positively responded to criticism.

I would like to mention that I noticed that the students formed small groups among themselves where they proofread each other’s works. For example, I understood that S1 and S6 would often consult each other. S4 said that she would give her writing to be checked by her student-fellows, but mentioned that she would not give it to everybody. S2 and S3 also shared their writing between themselves.

7.2 Results Related to Research Question 2: Participants’ Progress

The purpose of the research was to explore whether parallel blogging can be used as an interactive pedagogical tool to enhance students’ academic writing. Central Research Question 2 related to the second focus of the study was: Does blogging enhance academic writing skills?

In order to answer Research Question 2 I tried to track the students’ development by analysing the quality of their posts and comments. I elaborated a rubric (Appendix 13) with the help of which I was able to see if there was any progress in the process.

Taking into account the numbers of posts and comments, I am able to assume that, in general, blogging was a success with the students. Table 4 shows the number of posts the students wrote as well as the comments they made to the posts of their peers and on my blog when they were assigned to.

Table 4: Students' involvement in the experiment in numbers

Type	Number	Notes
Blogs	6	created by the students from the focus group
Posts	66	made by the students from the focus group
Comments	113 / 24	113 comments on the students’ posts 24 comments on the discussion page created on Tb (Week 8)

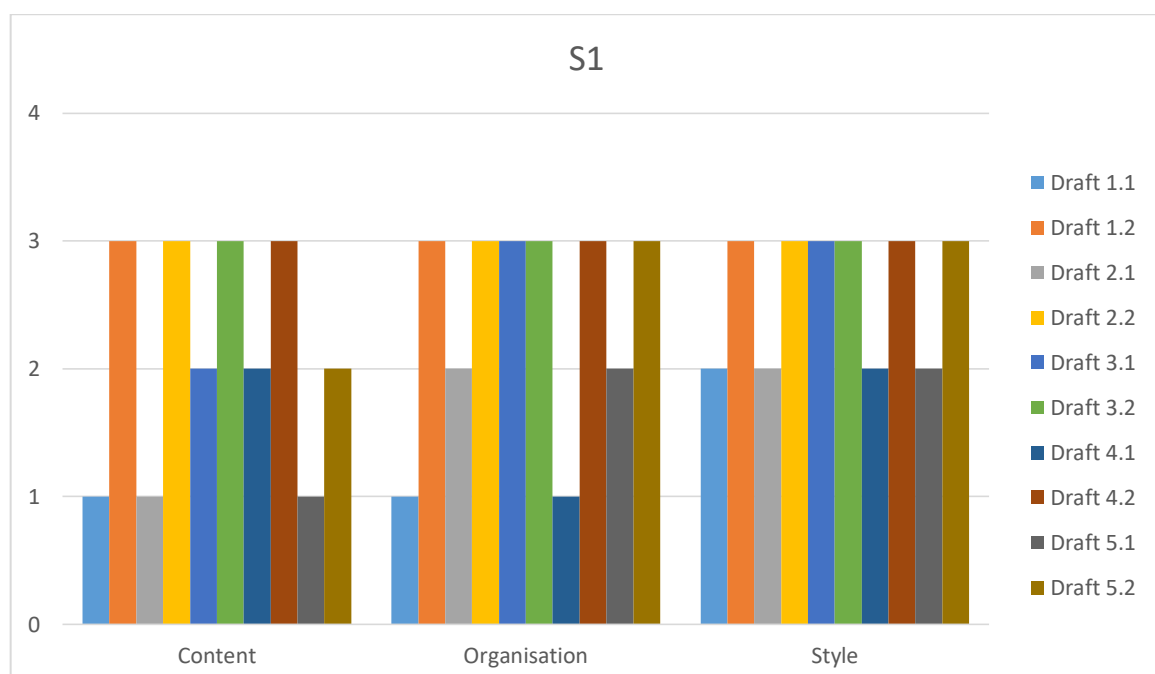
The total number of posts each student was assigned to make was 10 (Appendix 8). Yet, as seen there are 6 additional posts. Some students (S1, S2, S3, and S6) also posted the final versions of their work, after all the suggestions have been considered. This may also indicate that blogging had a positive impact on the students’ writing process. Their desire to share even

their final version suggests that they were determined to improve their writing skills, and that they saw blogging as a useful tool to help them to do it.

While analysing the students' writing it became clear that their progress was not linear. Moreover, it was not always ascending. On the contrary, there were significant variations throughout the experiment. The cause in the problem lies in the type of assignment the students were supposed to write. If they became familiar with the features of one type of academic writing, on the one hand, and could understand what was expected from them, on the other, they felt more confident and produced better texts. Whenever they had to produce something new, they would find it difficult and feel at a loss. The results are displayed in the charts below.

For example, S1 who was an active writer, always involved in the process and eager to learn would feel uncertain every time she was assigned a new task. Yet, if the task was similar to the previous one she would feel more confident. Her biggest problem was psychological, i.e. the fear of failure. Being a perfectionist she had the feeling that everything she was doing was wrong. She constantly needed to be reminded that making mistakes is part of the learning process and that everybody makes mistakes. Moreover, when compared, her writing was not worse than that of her peers. She was also the one who needed to be encouraged most. Yet, by the end of the experiment I was able to say that her self-confidence as a writer had increased and she felt more at ease when she had to write something for academic purposes. Her writing skills had also improved. Her progress is shown in Chart 21.

Chart 27: S1 progress



The first draft was poorly written. Although the assignment was to write a paragraph on their expectations concerning the use of blogs for academic purposes, S1 completely misunderstood the task. Her paragraph was not appropriately structured, and the writing was not clearly focused. It was difficult for the reader to understand what the writer's intentions were. Although S1 was good at following the grammar norms, yet the choice of words was not appropriate for academic writing.

However, her second draft clearly reflects improvement in her writing, which was purposeful and focused. The progression of ideas allowed the reader to move through the text without confusion. There was also improvement in terms of style and grammar, i.e. there were few grammar mistakes, whereas the choice of words was generally appropriate for the academic context.

Yet, when S1 was assigned to produce a different type of writing (Draft 2.1), she again found it difficult to understand what exactly she should communicate. The organisation and style were assessed as fair. After having been given feedback S1 was able to improve her text. Yet, it seemed that the most difficult part for her was to determine what knowledge to communicate.

The third writing assignment (Drafts 3.1 and 3.2) was similar to the previous one (Draft 2.1 and 2.2). That is why, S1 showed good skills at organising the text and following the stylistic norms. The oscillation was again in her uncertainty regarding what knowledge to communicate to the reader.

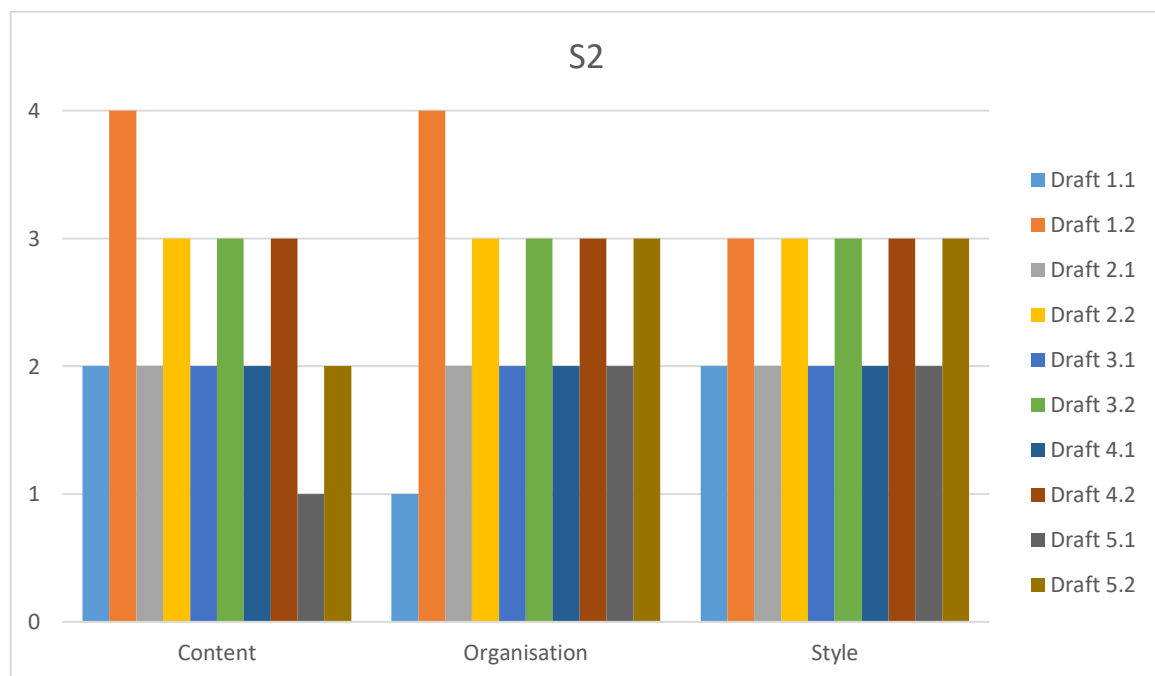
This did not however happen when she had to write a new assignment (Drafts 4.1 and 4.2). S1 found it difficult to organise the text and follow the rhetorical patterns, yet she seemed to know more or less what she was expected to communicate. This could be explained by the fact that, in general, students were taught what they were supposed to write while making a short story analysis (as seen from the analysed curricula, much attention is devoted to short story analyses). Yet, it seemed that students lacked the skills to organise their text in a unified whole, following the stylistic norms.

The last assignment (Drafts 5.1 and 5.2) was different from the previous ones, and again S1 found it difficult to communicate clearly her intentions. After receiving feedback and having interacted with her peers, she was able to improve her writing skills and produce a better version of the first draft.

S1 managed to improve her writing skills because she was actively involved in the blogging process. She confessed that she read absolutely everybody’s posts. By comparing hers to theirs she tried to improve her own texts. She even expressed her regret during Skype conferences that she was not able to comment all her peers’ posts because ‘I need time to write so that it [the comment] is good... I can’t say I like it [the peer’s post] and just it... to write it [comment] is like writing the essay’. Thus, she could be said to have developed her critical thinking as well.

S2 seemed to be interested in the process of blogging. She was a motivated student (although she claimed she was not a motivated writer in her pre-treatment interview). The reason was that she was intrinsically motivated. She wanted to prove her self-worth, to herself and to her peers. She was always present in the discussion, yet she did not participate when an issue did not concern her. It should be mentioned, however, that whenever asked she would immediately give a response. Her progress can be seen in Chart 28.

Chart 28: S2 progress



Her progress was not linear either. Her first draft (1.1) developed arguments superficially, and knowledge was communicated somewhat unclearly. She had problems in structuring her work. It was not clear where the topic sentence was. And although her writing was understandable, the word choice, syntax, and tone were generally inappropriate.

The situation dramatically improved in the following draft (Draft 1.2). As seen in Chart 7.2, her content was ranked as excellent as her writing seemed confident and focused. The organisational strategy demonstrated evidence of planning and a logical progression of ideas. There was a sense of unity in the paragraph. S2 was successful at communicating her intentions, yet she made a few grammar mistakes, which did not interfere with understanding.

The second writing assignment (Draft 2.1) was assessed as fair. Being assigned to write an essay, S2 did not manage to clearly communicate knowledge. Although she tried to organise the essay following a certain scheme she had in mind, it was obvious that she did not know how to do it exactly. In terms of style, the errors she made would often interfere with understanding.

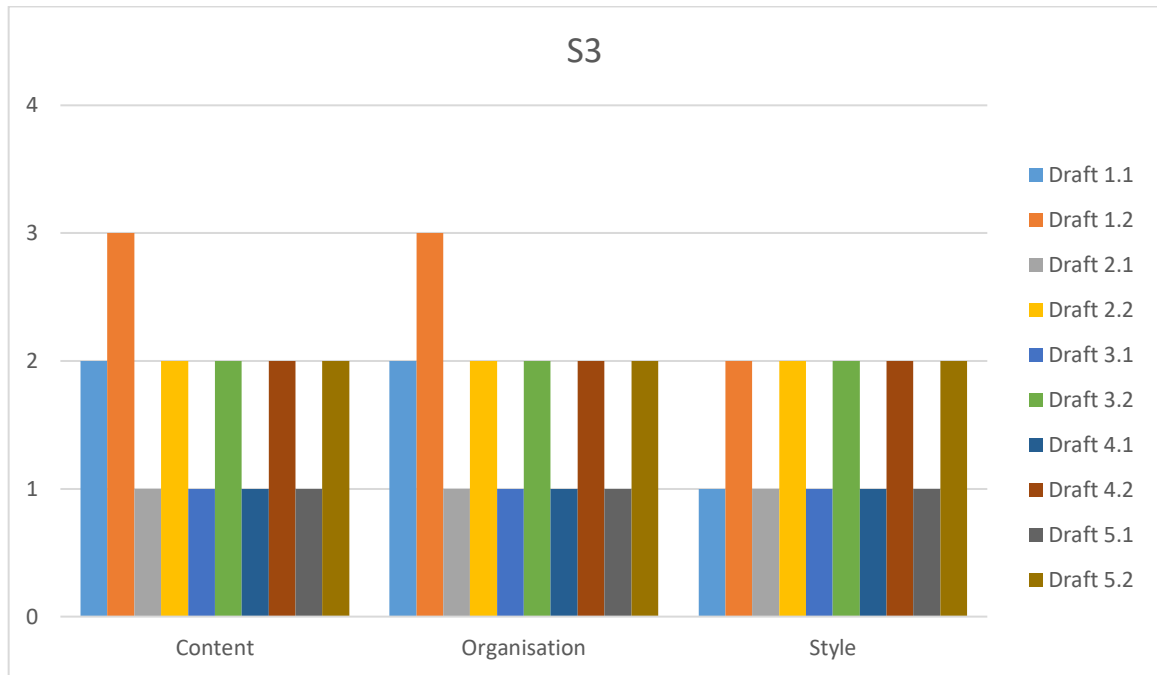
Being attentive to the given feedback, S2 improved her writing while writing her second draft (Draft 2.2). She managed to be focused and communicate her intentions more clearly. The errors she made did not interfere with understanding.

Chart 28 shows that S2 wavered while writing the other drafts. It may mean that the interaction that took place via comments and during the Skype conference helped S2 to improve her writing. Yet, when confronted with a different type of writing, she found it difficult to appropriately communicate knowledge. It seemed that she did not know exactly what to write. Even in her second draft (Draft 5.2) she still did not manage to develop her argument adequately.

Overall, S2 seemed to have improved her writing skills. She was very calm throughout the experiment and always open to criticism. Moreover, she seemed to be looking forward to constructive criticism in order to improve her writing. However, she avoided commenting her peers' posts. She seemed not to be confident enough to criticise her peers. It also appears that she believed that the peers would value the teacher's comments more, not hers.

S3 was extremely determined to improve her writing skills. It appeared to work hard and put a lot of effort into the writing process. Although her language proficiency in English was lower than that of her peers, she never gave up. On the contrary she would attentively consider all the given suggestions to try to improve her writing.

Chart 29: S3 progress



It was interesting to note that while writing the first draft (Draft 1.1), S3 proved to have some notions on what and how to write the paragraph. Yet, her errors totally interfered with comprehensibility. The situation changed after her posts had been commented on. She seemed to respond positively to criticism. In this way both her content and organisational strategy improved. Her style also improved, yet it appeared that although she worked hard, she found it difficult to respect grammar norms.

When assigned to write Draft 2.1, S3 seemed to write a good descriptive essay. Yet, although knowledge was communicated relatively accurately, the organisation seemed to be that of a list of ideas but not of a unified text. It was surprising to find that S3 also appeared relatively accurate when it came to stylistic organisation of the text. I looked on the internet and I discovered that what she had actually done was to take information from various sources and insert them in her text. I cannot say that she plagiarised them as there were slight variations. In addition she had used more than one internet source.

When asked, she recognised that she had indeed consulted several internet sources and that she ‘borrowed’ what she thought suited her aims. She did not seem to understand what plagiarism is. It was also surprising to realize that she was not very familiar with the notion of paraphrasing either. She tried to write her own piece the following week, and it was seen that she used paraphrasing. She also tried to rearrange her ideas in a better way so that the text could be viewed as a unified whole.

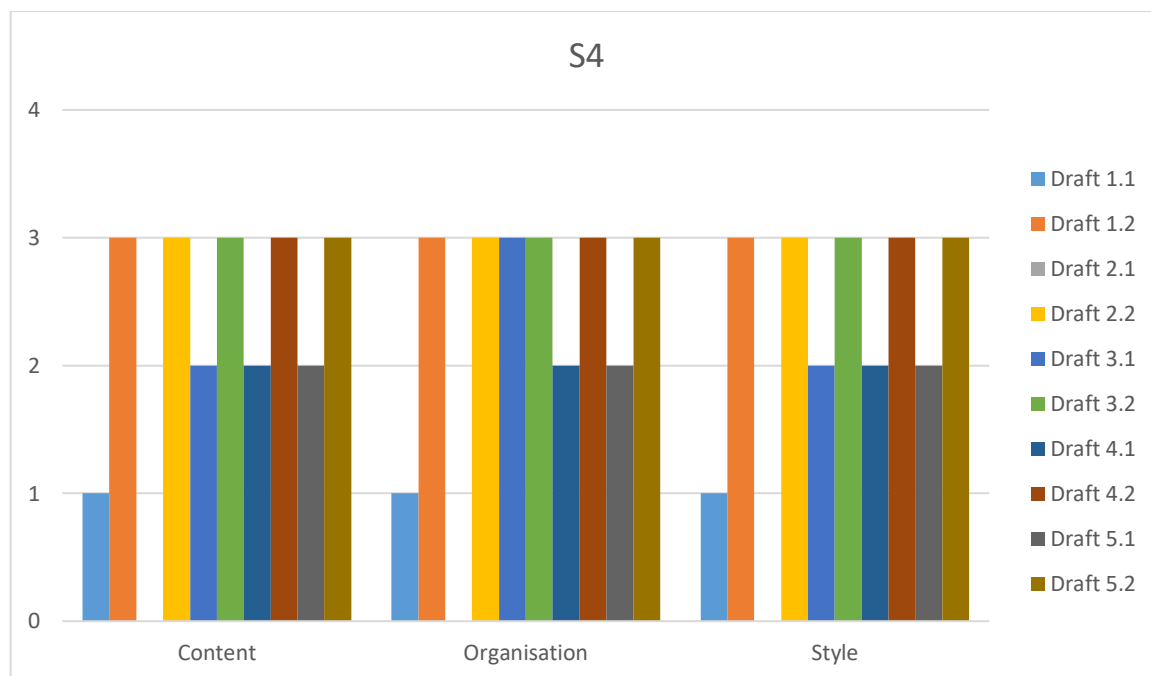
While writing Drafts 3.1 and 3.2 S3 seemed to have the same behaviour as while writing Drafts 2.1 and 2.2. It became clear that S3 used the product approach to writing (i.e. she needed a text model to imitate). In my opinion, one of the reasons might be that due to the fact that her language proficiency was lower and it was difficult for her to write in English. The solution she found was to imitate certain passages and include some phrases in her text. I also discovered later on when analysing the post-treatment interview that writing the first draft was easier for her than writing the second, because she knew that she would be given feedback to improve her writing. It thus became difficult to categorize her writing. Yet, it was seen that while writing her second drafts she was more confident than while writing the first ones.

As seen in Chart 29, her progress repeated the pattern of Drafts 2.1 and 2.2. So she would always get 1 for her first drafts and 2 for the second. I assume that at that stage the product approach was the approach that best suited her needs. So it was not the cognitive processes that mattered for her, it was the text she needed to imitate in order to feel confident in writing in English.

S3 seemed to be highly motivated, though. She really wanted to improve her writing skills. She closely followed all the suggestions she would be given, and would also try to give her own feedback to her peers' posts. She was determined and would do more than she had been assigned to do. She was also a student with a strong sense of duty.

S4 appeared to be disoriented. At first she was surprised to discover that her writing skills were not properly developed. She would state 'I failed' when she would be given critical feedback. Unlike S1, who was always self-doubting, she seemed to be more confident. It was the fact that her own expectations did not coincide with the reality that caused discomfort and confusion. Although she reacted positively to criticism she seemed to be confused she had made so 'many mistakes'. That is why she would often need encouragement and reassurance. It should be pointed out that her overall performance was good, so her perception of failure was erroneous.

Chart 30: S4 progress



The first assignment showed that S4 approached the task rather superficially. She was convinced that writing a paragraph on her expectations would be the easiest task. Yet, she did not understand the task itself. She was vague and not to the point. Once the shortcomings were pointed out to her she did the necessary corrections. So S4 appeared at first not to know what is appropriate for the academic context. Like her peers she also found it difficult to know what exactly she was expected to communicate and what the appropriate way to do it was.

As seen in Chart 30, S4 did not post Draft 2.1. She said she did not have time as the beginning of the experiment took place while they were doing their internship in schools. S4 said she was overloaded with the paper work she had to do at the end of her internship and did not have time to write the essay. Although she did not write the first draft (Draft 2.1), she posted the second draft (Draft 2.2). She claimed she had read all her peers' drafts and the comments, in order to write her own post. Indeed, it was seen that she was rather accurate and focused while writing Draft 2.2.

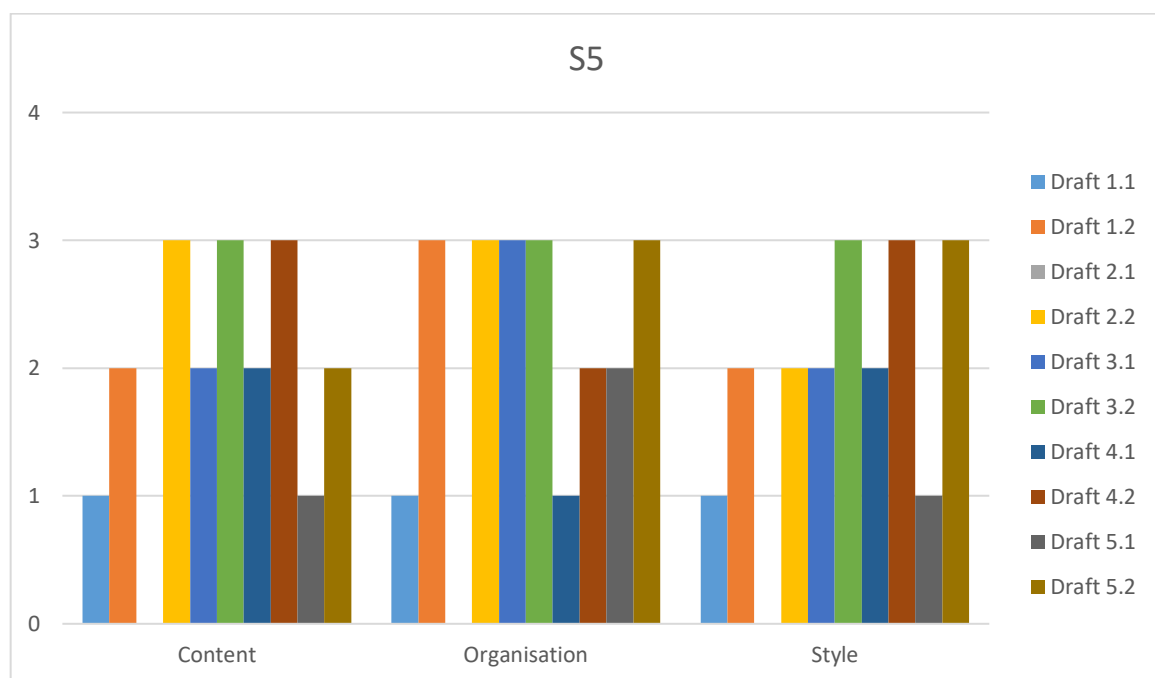
While doing the third assignment, she did not seem to have problems with the organisational strategy. The progression of ideas allowed the reader to move through the text without confusion. Yet, S4 did not seem to be able to communicate knowledge in a clear way, whereas the tone and the syntax of Draft 3.1 was inappropriate in an academic context. Her second draft (Draft 3.2) shows that she took into consideration the remarks and managed to understand what needed to be improved.

The same wavering happened while writing the other four drafts. As the assignments were different than the previous ones in terms of organisational strategy and knowledge to be communicated, S4 needed to be helped to understand their differences. Once she understood them she managed to improve her writing. It also became obvious that, S4 tried to avoid the ironic tone, which was a characteristic of hers. Indeed in one of her comments to a peer’s post, she recommended that her peer avoid using irony and sarcasm.

I can assume that it was the student’s tendency to ironize that confused her most. She somehow did not consider academic writing seriously. She seemed not to understand the purpose of this particular type of writing. Yet, she did her best to improve her writing skills.

S5 had the tendency to use literary tropes and tone in her writing. Indeed, she was good at creative writing, and would transpose its principles while writing for academic purposes. It seemed she did not like to follow the strict cannons of academic writing. The paradox was that she was aware of the features of academic writing, yet, when it came to writing an academic text she would, most probably unconsciously, use some stylistic features which should not be used in academic writing. Overall her performance was good. By working hard she seemed to improve her writing skills and became more aware of its peculiarities.

Chart 31: S5 progress



Regarding the student’s progress, it appeared that while writing the first draft of the first assignment (Draft 1.1), S5 also misunderstood the task, hence her paragraph did not clearly

communicate knowledge, leaving the reader with questions. Its organisational strategy was hectic, and the progression of ideas was rather confusing. When it comes to style, S5 used pompous language and seemed not to understand the role of hedging. Yet she was attentive to the comments made and improvements were seen in the second draft she posted (Draft 1.2). Thus, the moment S5 understood what exactly she was expected to communicate and how, she would feel more confident to doing so.

Like S4, S5 did not manage to write Draft 2.1, evoking the same reasons as her fellow student. Moreover, she missed the deadline for Draft 2.2. However, she insisted on posting it as she wanted to understand if she 'was on the right path'. She claimed that she read all her fellows' posts and comments and taking all the remarks in consideration she wrote her own. Indeed, in Draft 2.2 her writing was purposeful and focused, and the organisational strategy apparent. Yet, she still struggled to be successful at using the rhetorical patterns characteristic of academic writing.

While writing the third assignment (Drafts 3.1 and 3.2) she managed to create a good progression of ideas. The organisational strategy was apparent. Yet, only after having received the feedback to Draft 3.1 did she manage to make her writing more purposeful and clear in Draft 3.2. Her arguments were developed. There were also improvements in the style, which was suited for academic writing.

The biggest problem with Writing Assignment 5 concerned the organisational strategy. As in the case of previous students, this was basically the only type of academic writing students seemed to know what knowledge to communicate. They did not know how exactly to do so. S5 managed to understand how to write her analysis, and hence her improvement in Draft 4.2.

The last essay she was supposed to produce differed from the previous types. As S1 she found it difficult to determine what knowledge to communicate, on the one hand, and to follow the academic writing style, on the other. Yet, she improved her draft after receiving feedback from her peers and me.

It became obvious that S5 needed more time to do the assignments than her peers. In the end she would always do what she was assigned to and it seemed that she really wanted to do everything; it was just that she preferred to work at her own pace. She would say that she wanted to first see what her colleagues would post, and then write her own post. She also admitted to liking to talk to S1, S4, and S6 and discuss her writing. I definitely could not state

that she was not motivated to take part in the experiment as she positively responded to the use of blogs (see Paragraph 7.1).

S6 was always double checking everybody’s suggestions. She would question the feedback given to her and had the tendency to justify her choice. In my opinion, she had the right attitude, as it implied that she was putting a lot of thought into what she was doing. It did not mean that she rejected the suggestions. On the contrary, when explained what would be better to do in order to improve her writing skills, she would follow the advice. She was open to criticism and listened to her fellows, yet she would question. Ideally, it would have been better if all the students had had the same attitude.

Chart 32: S6 progress

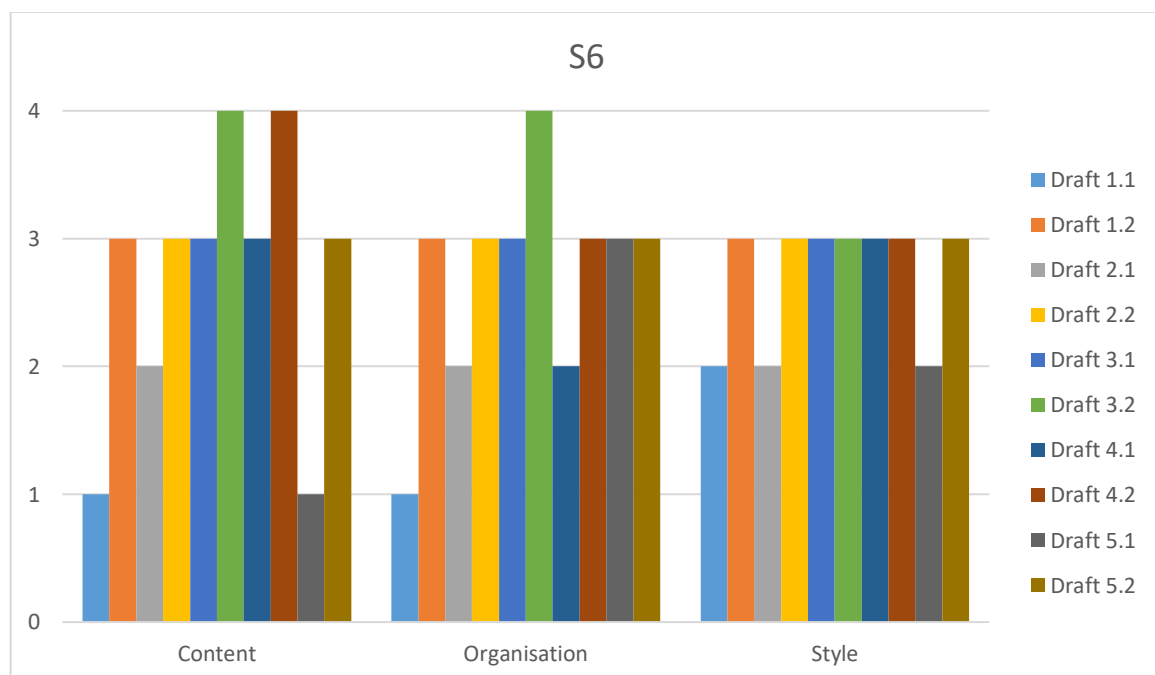


Chart 32 shows the progress of S6, who seemed to have improved her academic writing skills. Her results are more or less similar to those of her peers. She would also find it more difficult to write the first draft than the second. Yet, when given feedback, she would know exactly what to do.

S6 was also good at maintaining and improving her performance. For example, once she understood the way an essay should be structured and what knowledge to communicate, there would be no regression (Drafts 2.1, 2.2, 3.1, 3.2). Yet, when the essay was of a different type (e.g. Draft 5.1) she would feel confused.

Just like in her peers' cases, Draft 4.1 was the one that caused most difficulty, in particular in structuring it. It appears students knew what to write but they did not know how to do so.

As could be seen, basically all the students involved in the experiment did not manage to write Draft 1.1 appropriately. Although it was one of the simplest writing assignments they had to produce, they seemed to have completely misunderstood the task. They also seemed to lack basic knowledge on how to organise their paragraph as well as to what knowledge to communicate. However, it can be noticed that the moment they understood the peculiarities of academic writing they managed to improve their writing, even when assigned to write more complex works such as essays and short story analyses.

Table 5 shows the students' overall results during the experiment. The average of the results students got after writing the first drafts (1.1, 1.2, 1.3, 1.4, and 1.5) and the second drafts (1.2, 2.2, 3.2, 4.2, and 5.2) has been calculated.

*Table 5: Students' progress during the experiment
(Draft 1 compared to Draft 2)*

	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6	Total
Draft .1	1.8	1.866667	1.133333	1.833333	1.583333	2.2	1.73
Draft .2	2.933333	3.066667	2.133333	3	2.666667	3.2	2.83

As seen the average of the second drafts is higher than that of the first drafts. It may imply that the feedback received, and the interaction that took place after posting the first drafts helped the students to better understand how to improve their writing.

In Table 6 I tried a calculation of the way students improved their writing skills is attempted. As it was important to determine whether the students were familiar with the features of academic writing (i.e. organisational strategy, stylistic cannons, and knowledge to be communicated), the average of the results for each of the main three categories a rubric consisted of was calculated.

*Table 6: Development of academic writing skills
(Draft 1 compared to Draft 2)*

	Draft .1	Draft .2
Content	1.608333	2.833333
Organisation	1.791667	2.9
Style	1.808333	2.766667
Total	1.73	2.83

Just as in the previous case, it becomes obvious that that the students managed to improve the quality of their writing after having been helped to get a better understanding of what should be done. Thus the interaction that took place after writing the first draft and before posting the second could be said to have facilitated the development of the students' academic writing skills. Blogging in this case was a pedagogical tool allowing this interaction to happen.

Due to the fact that my assistance was constantly needed, it might be assumed that it was not the blogging practice exclusively that contributed to the development of the students' academic writing skills. It was a tool that helped to create the context for the student – student / student – teacher communication to take place.

7.2.1 Results Related to Subquestion 2.1: Students' Reactions to the Use of Blogs

Subquestion 2.1 aimed to determine the way the students from the focus group responded to the use of blogs for academic writing tasks.

In order to answer Subquestion 2.1, the surveys (Appendix 10) the students agreed to answer at the end of the experiment, where they expressed their attitude towards using blogs for writing tasks, were analysed. The students were asked to justify their answers and describe their behaviour during the experiment. In this way it was possible to determine their overall attitude towards blogging for academic purposes. In addition, the students' reactions were analysed using a specifically created rubric (Appendix 14) to determine the degree of weekly involvement. In this case, the observations made during the experiment were also taken into account.

Overall the students positively responded to the use of blogs. Even when they were assigned to write the first paragraph (Assignment 1) concerning their expectations as to the use of blogs it was seen that they hoped it would help them improve their academic writing skills. Although the students could not properly understand in what way exactly the experiment would proceed, they were all interested and showed enthusiasm.

This idea was reinforced by the answers they gave to the surveys. S1 and S3 said blogging helped them to improve their writing skills by receiving critical feedback from their peers and teacher (i.e. I was seen as a teacher in the paradigm, not as a researcher). In their opinion, having the opportunity to write more drafts helped them to better understand their mistakes. S2, S4, and S6 claimed that while blogging they learned how to write, and as a consequence

improved their writing skills. They believed that it helped them to improve their organisational skills, and arrange ideas in a more coherent way. S5 pointed to the fact that blogging helped her to better understand what to write in her graduation paper. She also mentioned that it might be useful for her future career. Their answers are summarized in Table 7.

Table 7: Students' overall reaction on the use of blogs

Student	Attitude	Improvement	Cause
S1, S3	positive	Understanding the mistakes	critical feedback / interaction
S2, S4, S6	positive	How to write	critical feedback / interaction
S5	positive	What to write	critical feedback / interaction

The students approached writing more consciously and seriously. From their answers it can be seen that they were aware of the cognitive processes involved in writing. Comparing their attitude towards writing the first and second drafts, it can be noticed that writing the first draft was more difficult than the second. Indeed, they explained in their answers that writing the first draft involved more processes than rewriting the second. If in the first case they had to plan, brainstorm, put down ideas, and then rearrange them into a unified whole, in the second case they were mostly working on what changes to make in order to appropriately convey the intended meaning in their writing. They also claimed that the idea of posting their works online made them more responsible regarding the quality of their writing. The summary of students' answers is shown in Table 8.

Table 8: Students' experiences of writing their posts

Student	Primary focus	The most difficult part
S1, S5	process of writing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • writing the TS • writing the thesis statement • connecting the ideas in a logical way
S2, S4	organisation	
S3, S 6	coherence	

It was interesting to notice that only S3 stated that writing the first draft was the easiest part of the process. She justified her answer by saying that she knew she would be given critical feedback later on, which would help her to improve her first draft. All the other students said that it was (very) difficult to write the first draft. They had to think a lot and constantly revise their text before posting it. S4 however admitted to never reading her text once she had posted it: 'After posting, I don't read it, because as many times I read, as many changes I want to do'. The overall idea was that students lacked confidence while writing for academic purposes.

Regarding the second draft, all the students said that it was difficult for them to make the necessary changes in the first draft in order to improve their writing. Most of the students admitted that they were rather surprised that they were advised to make so ‘many’ changes (e.g. S1 said: ‘As I wrote my first draft I was sure that everything was fine’). Yet, their answers show that they were not discouraged, instead they were grateful for the comments made, as they realised that it was a means to improving their academic writing skills. I believe that the comments (in particular those made by the peers) helped them to increase their confidence as academic writers. In this way, blogging could be said to have contributed to the development of the students’ academic writing skills.

The commenting process also enhanced their critical skills. The students closely read their peers’ posts and tried to determine whether the text was appropriate for the academic context or needed to be improved. Commenting was a way of self-reflection on their own writing as they would often transfer their remarks to their own writing. For example S5 stated: ‘Thus, noticing them [the mistakes] in my mates’ works I tried not to repeat them in mine’. Table 9 shows the summary of their responses.

Table 9: The students' focus while commenting

Student	First paying attention to	Notes
S1, S3, S5, S6	organisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> they tried to pay attention to both structure and fluency of ideas, only some would focus more on the way a text is organised, while the others on the way ideas are linked together all of them mentioned paying attention to grammar mistakes
S2, S4	coherence	

Absolutely all the students responded positively to receiving comments from their peers. They found it very useful as they confessed they were pointed to mistakes they did not notice. They also emphasized the friendly nature of the comments. The peers were attentive not to hurt the other’s feelings. That is why they would offer advice and encouragement, without imposing their point of view.

When the students were asked to say whether blogging made the process of academic writing more interactive, they all said that it did. For example S1 gave a detailed account of in what way blogging had made the process more interactive.

Yes, it did. Blogging made writing more interactive indeed. It was not like usually as you sit down and just write and then revise your essay

for some times and there is nobody to share with. But, this time there were a lot of people who criticized or said what was good and I liked this. If I write and read my paper by myself I will not see all my mistakes, I will think my paper doesn't need any changes, any improvement. Instead, my peers and my teacher's comments and remarks helped me to see my problem from another side. Frankly, at the beginning, I was not excited by the idea that my post would be seen, read and criticized by somebody. When I began to write some essays I realized that it was no so easy to work alone. I just needed some help. Making my academic papers public I was sure that this would help me to become more confident and not to be afraid of sharing my ideas with others.

This answer reflects the way most of the students felt at the beginning. As they lacked proper understanding of what academic writing exactly is, they were surprised to discover that so many aspects of their writing needed improvement. That is why it was extremely important to establish a meaningful relationship with the students, but above all to create the appropriate context allowing to establish a meaningful relationship among themselves.

S2 also pointed to the fact that posting her work online helped her to prove her self-worth with regard to the others. In particular she said:

I can say that for me it was not a problem to make my blog public because it is an opportunity to show to my colleagues that I can also write something good as my colleagues do.

This is an issue in an academic context. Very often students who have a higher language proficiency take for granted that they are good academic writers as well, whereas the students whose language proficiency is not that high feel inferior. Thus, blogging was an opportunity to prove above all to oneself that he/she was also able to produce a good piece of academic writing. I can say that blogging was empowering as it increased the students' confidence in their abilities. For example, S3 stated:

I was proud to post my analysis even if there were mistakes and it was not always good, but I knew that blogging will help me to improve my writing skills and not to be afraid of make it public.

S4, S5, and S6 expressed the same opinion. In particular they pointed to the fact that by making one's writing public one would become more responsible for the quality of the text, and the feedback provided would contribute to one's development of academic writing skills.

As meeting the deadlines was a component in understanding the students' reactions to the use of blogs for academic writing tasks, I examined the way they were able to meet the deadlines. Table 10 shows the deadlines and when exactly the students made their posts.

Table 10: The dates when the students made their posts

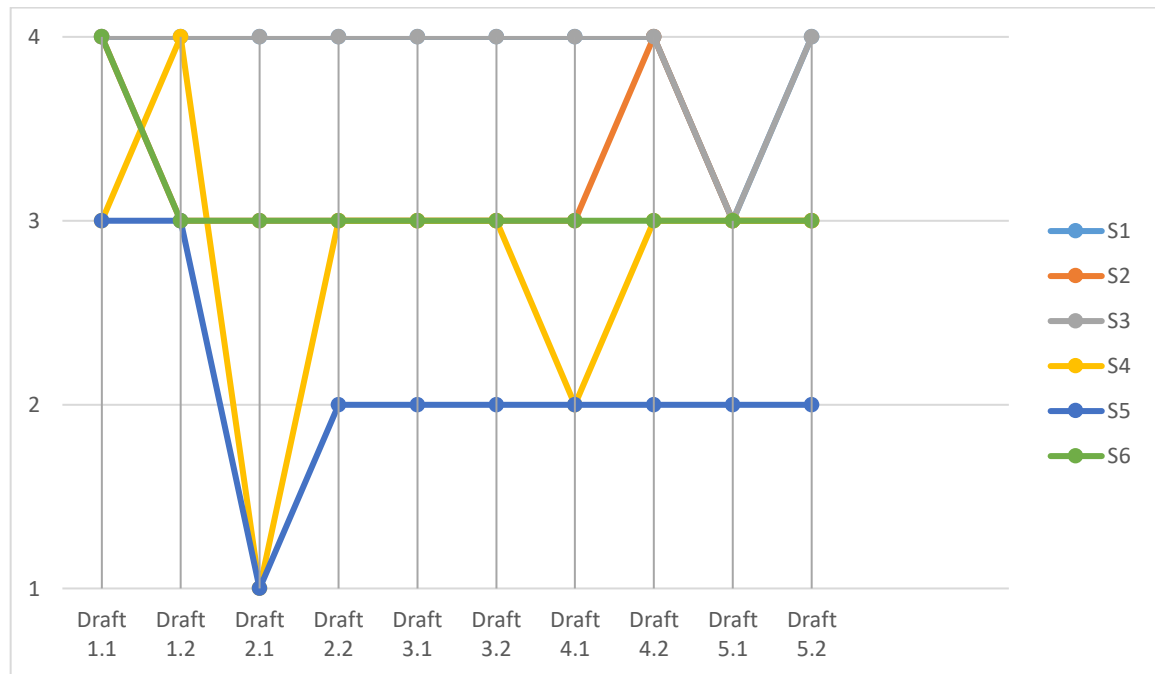
Assignment	Deadline	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6
1	Sep 8	07	08	07	07	09	07
2	Sep 15	13	15	12	16*	14	15
3	Sep 22	22	22	22	-	-	23*
4	Sep 29	29	29	29	29	Oct 05	28
5	Oct 06	05	06	05	06	07	06
6	Oct 12	12	13*	12	12	13	12
7	Oct 15	discussion					
8	Oct 22	judgment					
9	Oct 26	26	26	26	27	28	26
10	Nov 02	02	02	01	02	04	02
11	Nov 09	10*	09	10*	11	11	09
12	Nov 23	22	23	16	23	24	22
* published after midnight							

As seen most of the students met the deadlines on a rather regular basis. S4 and more often S5 would frequently miss the deadline. The main reason they claimed was that they did not have time to do the assignment on time as they were supposed to prepare for their classes. S4 would post the day after the deadline, whereas S5 would post even later. Yet, in the case of S5, as has been mentioned in her profile above, there was also another problem. Writing for academic purposes was even more difficult for her than for the other students. The problem was not in the student's language proficiency (which was high); it was rather in her tendency to use language inappropriately in her academic writing (i.e. she would use metaphors that would be more appropriate for creative writing). She also admitted that she would wait for her peers to post first, so that she could better understand how she should write her text in order to avoid using too much figurative language.

I also tried to determine their response to the use of blogs by weekly determining their involvement in the process. In order to do this, I created a rubric which allowed me to measure their progress if any. Thus, for example, the student's attitude was believed to be poor (1) if she did not meet the deadline, was unmotivated, and showed lack of interest. If the student found it hard to meet the deadline, was partially motivated, and posted sporadically, then her attitude would be fair (2). A good (3) attitude meant that the student met the deadline, posted regularly, was motivated, yet did exclusively what she had been assigned. Finally, the attitude was believed to be excellent (4), if the student met the deadline, was an active participant, made more than she had been assigned, was fully motivated, and always showed interest.

While determining the students' reaction to the use of blogs I also took into account the way they made comments to their peers' posts as well as their responses. In addition I took into account the way they interacted during the weekly Skype conferences we had. The results are shown in Chart 33.

Chart 33: Students' attitude to the use of blogs graphically presented



Thus, the average of the students' attitude would be 3.16. This means that overall their attitude was good and that, in general, they met the deadline, posted regularly, were motivated, and did exclusively what they had been assigned to. It was interesting to notice that their involvement depended on the difficulty of the task, i.e. if they had to write a new draft or re-write the previous one.

At the beginning of the experiment they were full of enthusiasm. The highest average was in the first week (3.66). They willingly accepted to use the new tool, yet they did not fully realize the complexity of the experiment. In my opinion, they did not become less motivated, as they showed determination to improve their writing. The explanation could be that they started approaching writing more seriously and it required more effort and time than they were used to.

Indeed, I noticed that whenever they become more familiar with the features of a particular piece of academic writing and understood better what was expected of them, they would become more self-confident and feel at ease to post, comment, and interact. For example, the

second and the third essays were rather similar in terms of structure and knowledge to be communicated. The first draft (2.1) showed a decrease in their positive attitude, the average being 2.66. Yet, the moment they understood how and what to write, the average became 3.16.

Then while writing draft 4.1, the students again felt insecure and again there was a decrease in their positive attitude. They were more anxious and uncomfortable as they did not know how exactly to write their analysis. The moment they learned how to do it, they became more active. It could be assumed that lack of expertise hampers the interaction among themselves as well as they do not feel confident enough to share opinions and to make suggestions.

The same thing happened when they had to write the last argumentative essay. The average of their involvement while writing Draft 5.1 was 2.83. Moreover, they asked for a week more to get a better understanding of what they had to do. That increased their self-confidence and they felt more relaxed (the average was 3.16). The results are shown in Table 11.

Table 11: Students' attitude to the use of blogs numerically displayed

	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6	Average
Draft 1.1	4	4	4	3	3	4	3.666667
Draft 1.2	4	3	4	4	3	3	3.5
Draft 2.1	4	3	4	1	1	3	2.666667
Draft 2.2	4	3	4	3	2	3	3.166667
Draft 3.1	4	3	4	3	2	3	3.166667
Draft 3.2	4	3	4	3	2	3	3.166667
Draft 4.1	4	3	4	2	2	3	3
Draft 4.2	4	4	4	3	2	3	3.333333
Draft 5.1	3	3	3	3	2	3	2.833333
Draft 5.2	4	3	4	3	2	3	3.166667
Average	3.9	3.2	3.9	2.8	2.1	3.1	3.166667

The overall positive attitude towards the use of blogs could suggest that using blogging as a pedagogical tool could help the students to improve their academic writing skills. However, they need to understand the task exactly and be aware of the features of each type of academic writing. In this way they are more confident and more motivated. In addition, they need to be constantly encouraged to interact and share opinions among themselves. In this way the process of writing can become more pleasurable and purposeful. It might also help the students to view academic writing as an interactive process, where the text is addressed not only to one reader (i.e. the teacher) but also to other readers, who share the same background knowledge and might engage with them in a dialogue.

7.2.2 Results Related to Subquestion 2.2: Strategies to Motivate the Students

Subquestion 2.2 tried to find the answer to the question: What strategies should be applied by the teacher in order to help the students to improve their academic writing skills?

While planning my research I developed a list of strategies to be applied during the experiment. In this case, we refer to strategies used to help students develop their academic writing skills through blogging. In particular, the purpose was to facilitate the students' understanding of what academic writing is, what the purpose of academic writing is, and how to organise an academic text.

As conducting an action research project implies carrying out a systematic enquiry of the way it is progressing, every week I ascertained whether the strategies that were used were actually working. Some issues arose during the experiment which were not initially foreseen which made me reflect upon the causes and find possible solutions.

The following is the list of the strategies that was drawn up:

1. integrating technology;
2. creating a comfortable environment ;
3. choosing topics that might interest the students;
4. blending approaches;
5. responding to students' writing;
6. encouraging peer commenting;
7. collaborating with their teachers;
8. Skype conferencing.

With regard to the first strategy on the list, I wanted to determine what might be the best way to integrate technology into the curriculum. The primary purpose was to determine whether blogging could be used as a pedagogical tool that would help the students to develop their academic writing skills. It was important to consider the students' needs and foresee the possible outcomes. Thus, I created a small network interconnecting the Sbs (i.e. students' blogs) and the Tb (i.e. teacher's blog). This small network shared the same background knowledge, and had the specific aim to improve the academic writing skills of its members.

I observed that the students liked blogging even though they considered it to be difficult. It was a way to gain confidence as writers, to improve their writing skills, and to become affiliated to a certain discourse community. It was easier for them to meet the reader's expectations as they from the very beginning, they had an idea about whom they were addressing and what was expected of them. Thus, the students became more aware of the processes involved in writing for academic purposes.

The use of technology allowed us to help the students to understand in what way they could use internet sources to improve their writing. It was important to help them become technologically literate. For example, they realized how important it is to consult more than one source, they became able to discriminate between a valuable source and one that should be further checked. They also managed to get a better understanding of what plagiarism is and what its consequences might be.

In reference to the second strategy listed above (i.e. creating a comfortable environment), it was important to create a comfortable environment for the acquisition process to take place. As seen, students seemed to find academic writing not only time consuming but also stressful due to its complexity. They tended to feel insecure and to perceive themselves as unmotivated academic writers. It turned out that students needed not only to be instructed on how and what to write, but also to be encouraged throughout the process.

Blogging appeared to offer a good context for the development of academic writing skills. It seemed to boost the students' awareness of the processes involved in writing for academic purposes. On the one hand, students became more conscious about their own writing practices. On the other, they developed their critical thinking by following their peers' progress. These two factors contributed to a better understanding of the features of academic writing, but above all they helped them to become more aware of the interactive character of academic writing. Indeed, they admitted to becoming more responsible with regard to what they were writing as they were aware of the reader's expectations.

Blogging also offered the possibility to help the students to become more confident writers. This confidence derived not only from the grades they would get for their writing, but also from the constant encouragement they received from me, but above all from each other. They did not always leave comments on their peers' posts, but they would always discuss their writing after they had posted it. This was something I discovered during the Skype conferences we had.

Regarding the third strategy (i.e. choosing topics that might interest the students), it turned out that choosing a topic to write on is extremely important for the students' motivation. They admitted that if the topic was 'boring' they did not like writing as the process of writing tended to become tedious and irritating. Moreover, they would view their product as useless and unimportant. Consequently they would spend less effort and time while doing it.

The topics were selected by taking into account what the students might need for their academic programmes, on the one hand, and what they might like to write about, on the other. The process of determining the topics was quite challenging as the students were negatively predisposed towards academic writing in general. Yet, the awareness that blogging could help them to improve their academic writing skills boosted their motivation.

The students enthusiastically responded to the first writing assignment, which asked them to write a paragraph about their expectations about blogging. The indication that they had to write only a paragraph seemed to boost their motivation. Thus, proceeding from elementary to more complex writing tasks was beneficial in this particular case. The students finally understood what they were expected to write in a paragraph.

After the first draft I noticed the tendency the students had to complicate the process of writing. They seemed to be familiar with such notions as topic sentence, coherence, yet, they did not know how to properly formulate a topic sentence nor how to achieve coherence. So although they knew some theory about writing, they did not know how to apply it.

The second writing assignment was more complex as it asked the students to write a descriptive essay on the features of academic writing. Although they clearly saw that the task was more difficult than the previous one, they were challenged to write as they had to apply in their essay the things they were actually writing about. S6 said during the Skype conference that it was interesting for her to write about the features of academic writing and simultaneously apply them in practice, i.e. in her own writing.

The third writing assignment was based on their internship experience in Moldovan schools. They liked the idea of sharing their experience to their small academic community. Moreover, as the essay was also descriptive, they found it easier to produce this type of writing. They felt confident while writing. Besides, they were curious to read their peers' posts in order to see what their experiences had been.

The fourth writing assignment intended to help them to understand the particularities of writing a short-story analysis (a type of writing included in the academic programmes). As this type of writing differed from the previous ones, students found it difficult to cope with it at first. What came as a surprise was that in this particular case they knew what knowledge they were expected to communicate. However, they did not know how to organise their writing in a coherent way. Yet, they were motivated by the practical need they had (they knew they would need to produce quite a number of analyses for their practical English class).

The last assignment again caused problems as it was different from the others. This time the students were asked to write an argumentative essay, where they were supposed to comment on a quote concerning linguistics (i.e. "Perhaps of all the creations of man, language is the most astonishing" Lytton Strachey). Although it was difficult as they did not know what to communicate in their essay, they were interested in doing it as they knew that they would need to write similar essays for the course on General Linguistics.

Noticed that, the moment the students realized what they needed to write for (e.g. course on General Linguistics, or practical English class) became more motivated to improve their academic writing skills. Another particularity that I observed was that the moment the students understood what to write and how to organise their writing, they would become more motivated. Thus, it was not so much the topic that hampered their progress in academic writing but the fact they lacked background knowledge on how, what, and why to write.

Another strategy I tried to apply was to blend the existing approaches to writing in order to help the students to develop their academic writing skills. First of all, blogging seemed to be the optimal context for the process approach to writing to be applied. Indeed, as the students had to write two drafts before submitting the final version, they became more aware, while writing the drafts, of the processes involved.

The students admitted that they realized the importance of revising what they had written, something they would neglect previously. They would often refer to the first draft as extended ideas in the note form. It would be after the first draft that they would judge the quality and usefulness of the ideas, and rearrange them in a more appropriate way. So they became actually aware of the stages of writing and their importance in the production of a coherent academic text.

While planning Assignment 4 (the so-called short-story analysis), I tried to apply the genre approach to writing. I first tried to help them to build knowledge of the field by starting a discussion page on Tb (i.e. teacher's blog) where the students were asked to discuss with their knowledge regarding the rhetorical patterns characteristic of this particular type of writing. It should be pointed out that the students were quite familiar with these issues.

The next stage consisted in making the students understand how to model their writing. That is why I posted on Tb three samples of analyses which they were supposed to comment upon after having deconstructed the texts. I observed that the more complex the writing was the more difficult for them it was to deconstruct it. They could better understand the analysis where the writer's language proficiency was upper-intermediate, whereas the analysis with more complex rhetorical organisation got a negative feedback from the students.

Their first draft was supposed to be a sort of a joint construction of the text, where the students would assist each other in writing the first draft. Yet, what happened was that I was the one assisting them mostly in the process of writing the first draft. The comments I made were mostly taken into consideration while independently constructing the text.

Responding to students' writing was another strategy applied during the experiment. It appears to be the most resultative strategy of all. The students from the focus group were 'authority – oriented' learners (Nunan, 1991: 170). Hence, they constantly needed the virtual presence of a teacher to scaffold their writing process. They felt the need to have an authorial voice on whose expertise they could rely on. This observation was confirmed by the students' answers from both their pre-treatment interviews and post-treatment surveys.

Related to this strategy was the next strategy in the list, i.e. encouraging peer commenting. From the results shown in Table 3 (p. 140), only two students can be seen to be continuously involved in commenting their peers' posts. The others seemed to be more reluctant to do so. When asked about their reluctance to peer comment the students said that they did not feel competent enough to provide a valuable critical comment. Thus their lack of confidence could be at the root of their unwillingness to comment.

However, throughout the experiment, I also observed that students believed that by commenting a peer's post, the latter might get offended. Although they all seemed to be open to criticism, they still felt this strain. In my opinion, it is a cultural specific issue as very often in Moldovan schools criticism is associated exclusively with bad results. Thus, there is the fear that by criticising someone, they would actually tell that person that she has failed.

Another strategy I applied was to collaborate with the students' teachers in order to be able to help the students to develop their academic writing skills. Even though the collaboration was not as regular as planned due to the teachers' lack of time, it was still beneficial. I managed to understand what the students' actual writing needs were (e.g. choosing an appropriate topic, focusing on particular types of writing they will need to produce for their classes). This helped me to further design the experiment. In addition, I could trace the students' progress by receiving feedback from their teachers.

The final strategy from my list was organising weekly Skype meetings. The primary aim of Skype conferencing was to observe the students' reactions to the use of blogs. Thus, it allowed me to conclude that the students positively responded to the use of blogs. I saw their enthusiasm in blogging in order to gain self-confidence, and to prove their self-worth. I also noticed that they were curious in following their peers' progress. Another positive thing was that they seemed to become more aware of the process of writing itself.

During the interactions they would often refer to specific stages and processes involved while they were producing their texts. Yet, the strategy I still did not succeed in implementing was to make them less afraid to comment their fellows' posts. Although we would discuss this issue during the Skype conferences, the students would still prefer not to leave comments on the peers' posts. However, they stated that they would give their feedback in the face-to-face interactions they had with their peers daily. Moreover, from their interactions, I understood that they were discussing their blogging practice among each other regularly.

In general, I could state that the strategies that were implemented helped me to achieve the set pedagogical goals. The students seemed to have positively responded to the use of blogs. Their overall performance improved resulting in the development of their academic writing skills.

7.2.3 Results Related to Subquestion 2.3: Teacher's Role

The purpose of Subquestion 2.3 was to determine the role of the teacher in the blogging paradigm. Initially, the intention was to minimize the teacher's presence in the process of writing, and thus boost learner autonomy. Yet, the experiment has shown that students lack confidence and always look for the teacher's feedback and approval.

Due to the fact that I was directly involved in the process, students did not thought of me as a researcher observing the experiment, but rather as a teacher implementing a new tool in her teaching practice. Although they were told about my position at the time, they would constantly refer to me as their teacher in academic writing; whereas the blogging itself was viewed as a course in academic writing. It appears that students needed to have a teacher constantly involved in the process. As they seemed not to trust themselves as academic writers, they needed someone on whose expertise they could rely on.

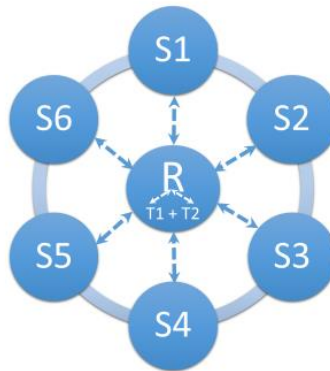
I have already mentioned that the first two writing assignments were also intended to determine not only the students' perspective on academic writing but also their needs. The first writing assignment (Draft 1.1) was supposed to reveal their expectations for the blogging practice. Yet, all the students wrote about expectations they had for the course in academic writing. That is why at the Skype conference held on Wednesday, September 10, I again highlighted the fact that I was not in the direct position of a teacher, and that I was not going to actually teach them.

It was interesting to notice that all of them said that they had understood it from the very beginning. Yet, even in their second draft of the first writing assignment (Draft 1.2) they would reveal their expectations for the course. The typical topic sentence of their paragraphs would be: 'The course in Academic Writing from this semester arouses certain expectations'. That could indicate that the students felt the need to have such a course in order to develop their academic writing skills (a hypothesis proven by the results from the questionnaires as well as from the pre-treatment interview, where it became clear the students found it difficult to write for academic purposes).

The interaction model designed in Figure 7 was working. The students were following the so-called teacher's blog, on the one hand, and each other's blogs, on the other. Yet, the interaction did not happen exclusively via the comments they made. As they knew each other, I found out that they were seldom discussing among themselves their posts. As a consequence they did not think they should repeat the same remarks they had made orally.

The Skype conferences were initially thought to serve as a medium of interaction where I would be able to observe the students' development as academic writers. Indeed Skype conferencing was a sort of platform allowing the interaction to happen, but its primary aim turned to be that of getting a better understanding of the mistakes the students had been signalled out. The model of the interaction is presented in Figure 10.

Figure 10: Interaction model during Skype conferences



R in the centre of Figure 10 is meant to represent the researcher’s position in the interaction model. As stated, my role was not limited exclusively to observing. I was constantly involved in the interaction. Moreover, I was considered to be a teacher in academic writing. One of the explanations might be that I was collaborating with the other two teachers in order to be able to determine what exactly the students’ needs were.

In their turn, the students knew about it, and would often ask me questions in regards to their writing (in this case the final variant submitted to their teacher). So as they did not receive the feedback from the teachers, they thought it appropriate to ask me what should be improved in their writing. I would like to emphasize the idea that teachers did not offer feedback only because of lack of time (I have already stated that academic writing was not included in any of the programmes).

In general, the conference would begin with a discussion regarding what the students had managed to achieve so far. Due to the fact that some students (S1, S4) were initially more negative thinking, time was needed to explain that nobody’s writing was a failure. The students would address questions regarding their drafts. It should be mentioned that in doing so they wanted to get a better understanding of what academic writing is, and what they should pay attention to in order to improve their writing skills.

Table 12: Skype conference dates

Assignment	Date	Skype conferencing		Deadline for the assignments
		Type of interaction	Presence	
1.	09.10	T/R – S	All	Sep 8
2.	09.17	T/R – S / S – S	All	Sep 15
3.	09.24	T/R – S / S – S	S4, S5 missing	Sep 22

4.	10.01	T/R – S / S – S	All	Sep 29
5.	10.08	T/R – S / S – S	All	Oct 06
6.	10.15	T/R – S / S – S	All	Oct 12
7.	10.22	T/R – S / S – S	All	Oct 15 discussion
8.		T/R – S / S – S		Oct 22 judgement
9.	10.29	T/R – S / S – S	All	Oct 26
10.	11.05	T/R – S / S – S	All	Nov 02
11.	11.12	T/R – S / S – S	All	Nov 09
	11.19	T/R – S / S – S	All / discussion on request	
12.	11.26	T/R – S / S – S	All	Nov 23

Table 12 shows when the Skype conferences took place, what assignment each meeting related to, the students' presence as well as the type of interaction that happened. As seen, only during the first meeting the students did not seem to be quite comfortable to participate in the discussion. It was mostly unilateral involving two participants, i.e. the researcher (whom they identified as their teacher) and the student. However, beginning with the second meeting, the students would start participating in the dialogue. They seemed to gain more confidence and not to be afraid to state their viewpoint. They would complement each other and point out what they liked in their peers' writing.

It was also interesting to notice their linguistic behaviour during those meetings, which I grouped into two main categories: confident and uncertain. Table 13 shows the typical phrases students would produce.

Table 13: Students' linguistic behaviour during Skype conferences

Confident	Characteristic of	Negative	Characteristic of
<i>I understand</i>	all	<i>I don't know</i>	S1, S3, S4, S5
<i>It's clear</i>	S2, S3, S5	<i>I can't understand</i>	S1
<i>But I did so</i>	S1, S4, S6	<i>Is it correct/right?</i>	all
<i>I consulted...</i>	S3, S6	<i>It's bad</i>	S4
<i>I wanted to say</i>	all		
<i>Why isn't right?</i>	all		

It should be mentioned that the students reacted differently depending whether they were writing the first draft of the writing assignment or the second. As a rule, they would be more negative while discussing the first draft, and more positive while dealing with the second. Yet, their confidence gradually increased and they would try to discuss their points of view and explain the choices they made. They were able to accept or dismiss the suggestions taking into consideration the acquired background knowledge.

Another interesting observation was that if the students understood how to produce a certain type of academic writing they would feel confident when they would have to produce a similar text (e.g. the case of Drafts 2.1 and 3.1). Yet, when confronted with a different type of writing, they again would become less confident as they felt that they lacked the necessary skills for producing that particular text (e.g. Drafts 4.1 and 5.1).

However, they seemed not to trust their peers' opinions enough to completely rely on their feedback. They would wait for the teacher's reaction as well. They would look for the teacher's approval, either in comments or during the Skype conferences. Thus, the teacher's role is essential in the blogging paradigm. This was confirmed in the students' post-treatment surveys where they were asked concretely to tell on whose opinion they relied most.

S1 for example claimed that she trusted her teacher's comments because 'she knows better how to write a good paper and she has much more experience in writing than any of my peers'. Thus, their lack of experience in writing for academic purposes made her doubt their peers' abilities of critically analyse her writing. She, however, admitted relying on her desk mate's feedback (i.e. S6) as 'she always supports me and I know that she is also very clever and she will give me only good pieces of advice'. At the end, S3 also seemed to be attentive to the suggestions given by the other peers as well.

S2 was even more categorical by stating that she trusted exclusively the teacher's comments. Just like in previous case she claimed that the teacher is the one who has experience and this makes her a reliable critic. It should be mentioned that even in this answer the student's bias towards the form of the language was revealed. In particular, she claimed that as the teachers 'knows better the language', her comments are the most reliable.

S3 mentioned the teacher in the first place. Yet, she also stated that she relied on the feedback given by S1 as well. In particular she said:

But also I trusted the comments posted by my colleague S1, because she always knew how to comment efficient and academic. She was every time blogging and adding comment to all of us not only to me.

S5 said that she also trusted the teacher's comments mostly. In particular, she claimed:

Those comments where the clearest for me. Every single mistake was pointed out together with hints to the right answer. What I liked was the fact that the teacher didn't just give the answer straight away. Using her hints we still had to find the right variant ourselves. Anyway, the teacher did always advice what would be better to way or use in a particular case.

Yet, the remaining two students from the focus group, i.e. S4 and S6, said that they trusted most the comments of S1. That might indicate that students started acknowledging the membership to a particular discourse community, where everybody could contribute with their knowledge and give critical feedback.

As seen only one student (i.e. S2) said that she relied only on the teacher's opinion. The rest claimed that they were taking into consideration the comments of their peers as well. What came as a surprise was the fact that the student who doubted her abilities most was the most trusted among her peers. This could be explained by the involvement of S1 in the experiment. She would not only leave comments to her peers, she would also talk to them face-to-face. Her serious approach made her a trustworthy critic. It should be mentioned that her remarks were always to the point.

Chapter 8 :

Discussions, Implications, and Recommendations

The final chapter of the present thesis is devoted to reviewing the findings from the previous chapters. Thus, the previously analysed data will be discussed here in order to determine whether blogging could serve as a tool to develop students' academic writing skills. In doing so, I will connect the undertaken study to the literature review. In this way, it will be possible to arrive at certain conclusions concerning the integration of blogging in the pedagogical practice at the university level and offer practical recommendations on the use of blogs.

As the results are discussed in light of the research questions, for the sake of convenience, the research questions are mentioned here again.

The research questions related to the first focus of the study are:

- What is the students' understanding of academic writing?
- What are the most common struggles students encounter in the process of writing for academic purposes?
- What is the impact of the World Wide Web on their writing for academic purposes?

The research questions related to the second focus of the study are:

- Does blogging enhance academic writing skills?
- How do students respond to the use of blogs for academic writing tasks?
- What strategies should be applied by the teacher in order to help the students to improve their academic writing skills?
- What is the role of the teacher?

8.1 Discussion of Results in Relationship to the Literature Review

The undertaken research has shown that the students' understanding of academic writing is either incomplete or erroneous in the examined context. In particular, they seemed not to be aware of the fact that academic writing is also a form of communication taking place within a particular socio-cultural context to which all the participants are affiliated. They perceive writing as a personal and individual act, not considering the potential reader's expectations.

While responding to an academic task in written form students do not see it as a means of interaction with other members of a discourse community. They are inclined to consider it a requisite of the academic programme they must write in order to get a grade.

It is difficult to trace the ethnography of their writing, whereas their hectic writing habits and practices cannot be grouped within an existing model of academic writing. What the students appear to be doing in their writing is knowledge telling, where the primary purpose is to generate content, which could be labelled as immature composing in Scardamalia and Bereiter's opinion (1987). The students do not look for means of solving the set problem, but for the next thing to say.

Another issue that has emerged is that the students do not seem to discriminate between writing in English and writing in English for academic purposes. They perceive writing as a skill that might help them to learn the foreign language and lack to understand the cognitive, social and linguistic demands of specific disciplines. As a result, they do not feel affiliated to a specific discourse community sharing the same background knowledge and are unable to appropriately write a text for academic purposes.

The results have also shown that although the students have been helped to develop the communicative competence in English, not all the four components are equally developed. Thus, the findings reveal that the discourse competence remains underdeveloped, whereas the linguistic, sociolinguistic and strategic competences are rather well-developed. Yet, it is the discourse competence which is central to the language needs of EAP students. This could explain the students' writing apprehension.

The students seemed to be unaware of any academic writing model, which is supposed to help them to generate behaviour, in this case to produce a coherent written text appropriate for academic contexts. They are not familiar, for example, with the model proposed by Swales and Feak (1994) (see Figure 2). This implies that they have a vague understanding of their audience's expectations and prior knowledge.

They would also find it difficult to clearly delineate the purpose of the paper they are writing. Very often the purpose is not clearly stated. As previously mentioned, their primary focus is on generating content but not on solving a problem. In regards to purpose, I believe that it is here that lies the biggest problem of the students' writing apprehension.

While describing the ethnographical model of writing proposed by Grabe and Kaplan (1998) (see Figure 1), two seemingly similar parameters were mentioned, where the writer should answer the following questions:

- for what purpose is the text written;
- why is the text written.

The first question relates to the overt intentions the writer has. These intentions are closely interconnected with the type of writing he/she is producing, e.g. reporting on a piece of research, discussing a subject of common interest, synthesising research done by others, etc. In this case, the writer is aware of what he/she wants to achieve by writing his/her text. I noticed that this purpose is more or less perceived by the students. They have a notion that by writing their piece they would make the reader (in this case the teacher) act in a certain way, i.e. accept or reject their viewpoints, which is expressed in the form of grades.

The biggest problem students have is in understanding why they write. This is the issue of covert intentions in Grabe and Kaplan's model. That could explain why the students are exclusively focused on generating content. They do not understand the practical use of writing for academic purposes, i.e. in what way academic writing contributes to their academic development. This seems to be the tendency of the young generation who has a pragmatic approach to achieve their goals. Whereas academic writing is time-consuming and requires a lot of effort, which does not satisfy the immediate set goals.

I believe that the moment the students manage to realise the importance of writing for their academic development, they would become more motivated to write for academic purposes. That is why, when applying the motivational model proposed by Caon (2006) to our concrete situation, the personal purpose component should be added there. Thus while creating a meaningful relationship among the participants (i.e. teacher – students, students – students), they should not only have a sense of duty, realise the need, and get pleasure in the process, but they should also understand what is the use of writing that particular text, i.e. in what way exactly it will help him/her personally to become more proficient and successful. They have to understand in what way this particular skill is related to long-term success for their future career.

Another issue that has emerged is that the organisational strategy is also underdeveloped. It appeared that students have difficulty in understanding how to appropriately organise their piece of writing. They seemed, however, to have some notions about topic sentence, yet they

found it difficult to actually formulate it. The ideas were often not connected, which made the transition difficult to follow. There were also problems in terms of style, as students would have the tendency to mix up the registers.

It could be stated that the biggest three challenges named by Kruse (2003) could be valid for the examined context as well. In particular, students faced challenges concerning the demands of knowledge, language, and communication. The idea is that students feel insecure as there does not seem to be enough attention devoted to academic writing. As a result they prefer focusing their attention on something they would see the results immediately and be both extrinsically and intrinsically rewarded (i.e. graded and satisfied with their achievements).

When it comes to technology integration in the process of teaching/learning, it should be noted that both the questionnaires and the results from the experiment speak in its favour. Both teachers and students seem to realize that technology could help to create the best learning environments for students. Yet, help is needed to understand how to actually do it. Again there should be a concrete model that would help both the students and the teachers to generate behaviour. In this respect, the model presented in Figure 3 could be of great help. It should be kept in mind that the potential of technology needs to be used most effectively in the teaching practice. The idea is that technology should not be viewed as a substitute of teaching but as a tool enhancing the process.

An issue that emerged throughout the interviews and the experiment was the fact that lack of communication between students and teachers was one of the causes of the students' writing apprehension. Lillis (2001) actually stated in her research that that was the main problem.

The tendency of implicitly teaching the academic conventions of a written text does not seem to be fruitful. The students from the focus group were mostly 'authority – oriented' learners, which implies that they needed the teacher's constant instruction, approval, and support throughout the process. They also needed to be explicitly taught the models that might help them to develop their academic writing skills. Although modern pedagogy argues for more implicit methods of teaching in general, it is the students' needs however that should be taken first into consideration and adjust the process of teaching accordingly. Thus, if at this level the students need to be assisted more in the process of learning academic writing skills, the teachers should think of possible ways of solving the problem.

Technology could help in this respect by bridging the gap in the teacher-student communication on condition its purpose is clearly defined and is designed to meet the students'

needs. The various results of the experiments presented in the literature review show that the outcomes might differ from one case to another. That is why it is important to consider everything carefully before integrating technology into the curriculum. If the students do not seem to benefit from its use, the teacher needs to consider other methods to achieve his/her goals.

In this research the use of blogs seemed to be beneficial for students. It was a means to bring together the teacher and the students and thus diminish the problem of lack of communication. It was also a means to make the process of writing more purposeful. It helped to create a micro-discourse community. In addition, it helped the students to gain confidence and prove their self-worth, making the process of writing intrinsically rewarding.

8.2 Aspects of Blogging Useful for the Development of Academic Writing Skills

The research findings seem to indicate that blogging could enhance students' academic writing skills. It is essential from the very beginning to understand in what way exactly the use of blogging might help the students. That is why its integration into the education process should be thoughtfully designed, whereas the students' needs, carefully considered. One should remember that the process itself could not be static, that is why the teacher should always be ready to adjust the set goals to solve the emerging problems.

During the experiment I observed in what way blogging practice helped the students to develop their academic writing skills. The results are discussed below.

Blogging helps the students become aware of the writing process

While analysing the data from the questionnaires as well as while observing the students' progress during the experiment, it became obvious that students realized the complexity of the writing process. Some of them seemed to be familiar with the stages involved in writing, which implies that they had a sort of theoretical background in writing. Yet, it became clear that they did not apply that knowledge in practice. The students from the focus group admitted that they would submit the first draft to the teacher as their final product.

Blogging helped them to see the non-linearity of the writing process. They realized that planning could not be attributed exclusively to the initial stage of writing. They understood that revising did not imply exclusively error correction after which the paper could be submitted. They were able to understand that it was not generating the content that should govern their

writing, but solving the problem, which implies generating original ideas. It was not about something to fill in, but what should be done in order to respond to an academic task in written form. There was a gradual transition from seeing writing as a product to actually applying the concrete processes that could help the students to improve their writing.

It was important for the students not only to know about the processes, but also to be aware of them while writing. Blogging implicitly helped them to become more aware of their writing processes as they had constantly to revise the content, to think of possible ways of solving certain issues, to understand what was wrong in their first draft and what should be done to improve it. The awareness that their text will be public also helped in this respect. The students actually admitted that the knowledge that their peers and I would read the texts made them revise the drafts several times, and constantly generate ideas. Whereas the fact that they had to write the second draft only reinforced the awareness of the processes involved in their writing.

The problem, however, was that the students did not have a concrete model that would help them to generate behaviour, i.e. to produce a coherent and cohesive text suited for academic contexts. I observed that not knowing how to organise their text was hampering the writing process itself. The moment the students understood the features of academic writing and what was expected from them, the process would become easier and they would feel more confident. This would happen after they had received feedback to their draft. The moment they were assigned to do a similar writing task they would not face the challenge of how to organise their text anymore and would focus exclusively on the process of writing.

Blogging helps develop reader awareness

Blogging seemed to develop reader's awareness in students. They confessed that writing their weekly posts involved thinking about their readers' expectations. The notion of a potential reader ceased to be abstract. Now they knew who exactly would be reading their work and what that reader might expect from them.

Blogging offered the possibility of micropublishing for a specific discourse community. The students in this experiment were able to produce their writing taking into account the five parameters proposed by Grabe and Kaplan (1998) needed to meet the reader's expectations. Thus they knew:

- the number of people who will read the text;
- the degree of acquaintance with the potential reader(s);

- the status of the reader(s);
- the extent of shared background knowledge;
- the extent of specific topical knowledge shared by the writer and the reader.

While blogging the students tried to reach the other members of the virtually created discourse community. The fact that they knew their readers contributed to their self-confidence enhancement and as a result the process of writing became more pleasurable. Most of its members (i.e. the students) shared the same background knowledge. Thus, it was easy for them to foresee the possible expectations the readers might have.

I was also part of that community. However, the fact that they did not perceive me as the grader / punisher helped me to diminish their affective filter. They did not seem to be stressed about not knowing what to say to me in order to meet my expectations. I also believe that the fact that they received feedback from me helped them to become more confident while thinking about me as their reader.

Before they had not been thinking of the teacher who had assigned a task as their reader, but as the one who would grade their work. They would focus again on generating content ignoring completely the reader's presence. That is why I often heard the students complain that they could not understand why they had been given a low grade by a teacher. They would ask themselves what the teacher wanted from them, and as consequence the teacher was viewed as a punisher not as a reader whose expectations had not been satisfied.

It is true that it was extremely difficult for the students to change their attitude. There seemed to be a total disbelief in their own abilities to produce something that would be appreciated by the teacher. As the teacher was viewed as somebody who knew everything the students seemed not to know what they could add to the teacher's knowledge. Thus, apart from the demand of communication, the demand of knowledge signalled by Kruse (2003) was valid in our case as well.

From the observations I made, the major reason for this problem laid in lack of communication between the teacher and the students. Students unfortunately did not feel affiliated to the certain discourse community that their teacher belonged to. Thus it was difficult for them to meet the expectation of a potential reader with whom they were not affiliated.

Blogging creates the environment for learner autonomy and boosts collaborative learning

The results from the questionnaires, as well as the students' behaviour during the experiment showed that the students relied mostly on their teachers' opinions. It became obvious that they greatly depended on the instruction they received in the classroom. In my opinion they were what Nunan called 'authority-oriented' learners (Nunan, 1991: 170). It means that the students preferred and were expecting the teachers to explain everything. Whereas, what they should do is to take responsibility for their own learning, which is a complex and tedious process.

What I wanted to achieve with blogging was also to boost the learner autonomy, i.e. to make them understand that their learning depended on the choices they were making. It does not imply that the students were not dependent upon their teachers anymore. The teachers should be sensible to the students' needs and create the optimal learning environments that would support and foster learner autonomy.

I thought that blogging can offer such an environment. The results show that students indeed seemed to become more responsible for their own learning. Yet, they were extremely depended on the teacher (in this case on me). Although they would make certain choices, they would still wait for my approval. It should be noted however that the moment they were encouraged to proceed they became more confident and would feel more secure while opting for the next choice.

I can say that blogging could partially boost learner autonomy. In this particular experiment it was enhanced by collaborative learning. This strategy, in my opinion, boosted learner autonomy in students. As they constantly needed encouragement, receiving encouragement from each other helped to increase their confidence. In addition, the fact that they were learning together how to write a text for academic purposes helped them to develop their academic writing skills.

During Skype conferences I observed that they would often point to the discussions they had when they met. So I can say that they became involved in the process as from their interventions it became clear that they discussed their writing at the university or even outside. I noticed that although they were in a way competing with each other, they were also collaborating. When they gave advice they would often express it in the form 'If I were you I would have done the same / this...'. Thus by discussing their writing they were actually collaborating in improving their writing skills.

Blogging makes writing more interactive

The findings from the questionnaires and interviews also showed that the students saw academic writing as a unilateral process lacking interactivity. As stated they initially did not consider their potential readers' expectations as the readers' presence was abstract. Blogging helped them to enter a virtual dialogue with their reader(s). This idea is closely connected to the previously stated benefits of collaborative learning, as collaboration means above all interaction.

It should be pointed out that the interaction was both virtual and real. I have already mentioned that students would discuss their writing with each other face-to-face. This might signal out the necessity they feel of actually physically interacting with each other. It also emphasizes again the idea that the existing lack of communication between them and their teachers hamper the development of academic writing skills.

Blogging in this experiment permitted the creation of a micro-discourse community where the members shared the same background knowledge and did not feel anxiety in interacting with each other. It helped to establish a meaningful relationship among each other, including myself perceived as a teacher above all.

The atmosphere was not stressful and it helped diminish the feelings of writing anxiety. It appears that blogging can offer the optimal context for the writing to take place, provided the teacher aims to establish a meaningful relationship among its members from the very beginning. Only in this case the students would feel comfortable to interact with each other.

I would like to mention that the interaction took place differently than I had thought initially. I thought that the students would engage in dialogue via comments they were supposed to leave to each other's posts. However, most of them preferred talking face-to-face. They still seemed to be afraid to leave a comment on the post. Their primary preoccupations were not to hurt the fellow's feelings and not to be misunderstood. As they knew each other very well, they preferred to actually discuss certain issues face-to-face so that there were no misunderstandings between them.

Yet, they responded positively to the feedback given by me. I discovered during the Skype conferences that they were actually discussing my feedback among each other. So my comments stirred discussion as well in their small group. They would become more confident to ask me certain questions and to argue the validity of their initial choices. In my opinion this should be only encouraged as it also boosts the students' critical thinking.

I can say that blogging offers the context for the academic dialogue to take place. It makes the students discuss their writing with each other. And it virtually allows the dialogue between the student and teacher take place. Thus, the problem of lack of communication can be diminished when using blogging as a pedagogical tool for these purposes.

Blogging makes the writing more purposeful increasing the students' intrinsic motivation

Blogging also seems to make the process of academic writing more purposeful. As said one of the main problems of students' writing apprehension is that they either did not understand or had an erroneous understanding of the purpose of writing for academic contexts. By posting their writing and reading that of their peers the students developed the sense of affiliation to a discourse community where they shared their knowledge. Academic writing ceased to be viewed as personal writing, whereas the idea that their texts would be read made their process of writing more purposeful. It results students needed to actually see the non-linearity of the academic written discourse and not only to have an abstract concept about it.

The students admitted that blogging made the process of academic writing more meaningful. During Skype conferences they would often express their satisfaction that they posts were read. I also observed that they were pleased in particular by the fact that I was reading their texts and reacting to them. They confessed that they liked seeing somebody with 'authority' responding to their writing. So 'authority-oriented' learners need reactions from somebody holding that 'authority' in their opinion. It needs to be emphasized that I was not the only one having that 'authority'. They identified a peer among themselves on whose opinion they relied and whose point of view was 'authoritative'.

Although the students were in a way competing with each other, I think it was this competition that actually made the process of academic writing purposeful. They saw the need to improve their skills in order to be accepted as a member of their small discourse community. They also saw that their writing was considered by somebody whose opinion they trusted. Another positive effect was that they saw in blogging a way of proving their self-efficacy in academic writing.

Blogging contributed to the enhancement of students' intrinsic motivation. One major factor speaking in this favour is that they wanted to prove their self-worth above all to themselves. So it was not the teacher nor the peer whom they wanted to prove their efficacy in academic writing in the first place. They wanted to demonstrate to themselves that they could write appropriate texts for academic contexts. The satisfaction they felt when they achieved

their goals was rewarding in itself. This leads to the conclusion that if used appropriately the network created with the help of blogging can contribute to the students' enhancement of academic writing skills.

8.3 Students' Perceptions in Using Blogs for Academic Writing Tasks

The findings from the questionnaires showed that overall the students had a positive attitude towards the use of blogs for academic writing tasks. Yet, it became clear that the students answering the questionnaires were hesitant while stating their attitude towards the use of technology. This is due to the fact that they did not have a clear understanding of how it would be possible to develop academic writing skills with the help of technology. This idea was confirmed later on at the beginning of the experiment.

The students from the focus group seemed to be at a loss at first. Although the objectives of the blogging practice had been explained, I had to explain them again during the first Skype conference. However, the moment they understood how exactly the blogging mechanism was supposed to function, they responded positively to it. The erroneous understanding of what academic writing is and what its purposes are hampers the students' academic progress when it comes to writing. As the students from the focus group vaguely could define academic writing, they found it difficult at first to understand what blogging was intended for.

While responding to the very first assignment, absolutely all the students believed that they would have a course in academic writing. They were supposed to write down their expectations within one paragraph, whereas what they did was to say what academic writing is. It could be understood that they were writing about what they believed was needed to be improved. It was seen, however, that even for that poorly written paragraph the students researched a bit the area as they clearly took some ideas about academic writing from the internet.

Another issue that surfaced from the very beginning was that the students needed to be told what to do exactly. Although they would do research on their own and look for ways of improving their writing, they constantly needed to be guided. I tried to explain and show that they needed to rely on their fellows' opinion as well. In this way the students' managed to develop reader awareness in their process of writing.

Gradually the students understood the mechanism and they saw how posting their texts can lead to the improvement of their academic writing skills. This idea was confirmed in the post-

treatment surveys where they all stated that blogging helped to improve their academic writing skills. Their steady progress also proves this idea. It should be noted that they learned how and what to write not only by writing but also by receiving feedback to their writing. They also learned it by reading their fellows' posts as they would constantly compare their own writing to that of their peers. Hence their critical thinking was enhanced.

The dynamics of their performance show how exactly their academic writing skills improved. Yet, it needs to be noted that the students' attitude scale was not linear. The explanation lies in the fact that whenever the students had to respond to a new task, they found it challenging as they did not know how to do it. What blogging did was to offer the possibility of interaction, i.e. it offered the context for the communication between teacher – student / student – student to take place. This communication helped them to understand the errors and to improve the quality of their writing. This explains the non-linearity of their attitude which would decrease when faced to do a different assignment from the previous one, and would increase when the type of writing to be produced was known to them.

It also needs to be mentioned that whenever writing the second drafts the students' writing anxiety would be diminished. The first drafts were approached with insecurity, therefore the students' attitude was influenced by their lack of knowledge in producing that particular type of writing. Whereas writing the second drafts was more motivational for them as they managed to determine what was good in their writing and what needed to be improved.

8.4 Researcher's Perceptions in Using Blogs to Enhance Academic Writing Skills

As a researcher, I wanted to determine whether blogging could be used to solve the problem of the students' poor quality writing within the context of Alecu Russo Balti University where I had worked as a teacher. I knew about the existing problem as I personally faced this problem. In addition, while discussing with my colleagues the students' academic writing skills, they would also admit facing the same problem. Thus my research was intended to find the cause of the existing problem and suggest a possible solution, in particular to determine if blogging can be used as a pedagogical tool that would help the students to develop their academic writing skills.

My interest in blogging was due to a previous use of blogging for another purpose. I used it as a tool to motivate undergraduate students to critically read artistic literature on their own.

The blogging practice had a positive impact on the students' extensive reading. That made me consider whether blogging could be used as a tool to enhance academic writing skills.

While designing my experiment I thought about it, first of all, as a platform that would help to create a small discourse community to which the students would be affiliated. Blogging was thought to be also a tool that would help diminish the teacher's presence in the process of the students' writing for academic purposes. Thus, the students would not need to be assisted by being signalled out their mistakes by the teacher. Instead they would engage in discussing among themselves and assist each other in the process of writing.

The results of the experiment as well as my personal observations allow me to state that blogging can offer the optimal context for the academic communication to take place. The students engaged in both virtual and face-to-face dialogues discussing their writing and as a result improving their academic writing skills. I saw them motivated to write as they found the process more meaningful in this context.

Yet, I cannot state that I succeeded in diminishing my presence during the process. Being perceived exclusively as a teacher, the students always needed to be assisted in the process of writing. The cause lies in the fact that they had not developed academic writing skills. Thus they needed to be helped to understand the features of academic writing. Blogging allowed to establish a meaningful relationship with the students. Their writing anxiety gradually diminished. They were motivated by the fact that they were members of the same community as their 'teacher' who would communicate with them.

As I discussed the students' progress with their teachers, I received positive feedback from them. They remarked that the quality of the students' writing improved and that they seemed to be more confident to write for academic purposes than their fellows not taking part in the experiment. Indeed the grades the students received for their writing were higher than those they had previously got for their academic writing. They were also higher than those of the other students.

My perception of the use of blogs is that if used appropriately, it can help the students to develop their academic writing skills. The teacher should know what goals he/she wants to achieve and design the practice accordingly. Yet, he/she needs to be prepared that his/her assistance might be needed more than planned at the beginning.

8.5 Pedagogical Considerations

This part is devoted to discussing what the best ways of scaffolding the students' development of academic writing skills might be. The experiment was designed taking into consideration the latest tendencies in foreign language education. In particular, the students were considered as the subjects of the process and not as the objects receiving the information. In this way they were encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning and not to be afraid to take risks. It was important to determine what approach to writing would best suit the set goals. That is why blending approaches was believed to be more efficient for the students' progress than the application of a single approach. It was also thought that minimizing the teacher's role in the process would also contribute more to the students' development of academic writing skills. The results are discussed below.

8.5.1 Approach to Writing

As teaching writing cannot be designed within the traditional way of teaching the other macro skills, it is important to create the best context in which writing can take place (cf. Celce-Murcia and Olshtain, 2000). It is a skill which can be enhanced only by practicing it, as one of the teacher said in her answer from the questionnaire academic writing can be enhanced if students 'write a lot'. Definitely teachers should guide the students throughout the process. Blogging can offer the optimal context for the writing to take place, where students can be responsible for their own learning and become more aware of the writing process itself. It also offers the possibility to the teacher to scaffold the acquisition of the academic writing skills.

In essence, blogging seems to be the platform where the process approach to writing is best suited. Indeed encouraging students to write more drafts helps them to develop awareness of the writing process. They would assist each other in this process and encourage one another. However, academic writing is a particular type of writing which involves knowledge of its characteristic patterns. That is why, the approach should be designed in such a way as to make the students realize these peculiarities and be able to use them appropriately in their writing. Similarly, as students had to write in a foreign language (i.e. English) it is important to help them to realize that the rhetorical patterns characteristic of their mother tongue in most cases cannot be transposed in the English language. That is why the teacher should consider blending the various approaches to writing in order to respond the students' needs.

During the experiment I tried to blend process and genre approaches, as well as be guided by the principles of contrastive rhetoric. The very fact of asking the students to post their drafts, reflect upon them, and then rewrite them helped to develop awareness of the writing process. The students could actually understand and apply the stages involved in the process approach. It helped them to improve their writing skills by constantly rethinking their products. They realized that their texts should not be thought in terms of a final product while writing them but as a variant which can be constantly improved.

Indeed, what I discovered was that the students had the tendency to apply the product approach to writing. Yet, they did not have a concrete text they imitated. They rather had a mental concept of what an academic text should look like and what it should consist of, and what they did was trying to imitate that model. In most cases, they thought that the ideal text should be general, and not specific.

It should be mentioned that they were not prepared to realize that an 'ideal' text cannot be produced at once. I observed from their reactions after writing the very first draft that they were not expecting to receive so much critical feedback. They thought that their draft was appropriately written and what it needed was only proofreading. They were expecting to be signalled out grammar or spelling mistakes.

Gradually, their attitude changed. Although no explicit teaching of the process approach to writing had been done, they managed to change their understanding of the writing process due to the blogging practice. I was not teaching them how to write, I was rather scaffolding their writing process by constantly communicating with them. I can say that they implicitly learned to apply the process approach to their writing.

As the students had the tendency to transpose their mother tongue rhetorical patterns to their writing in English, explanations needed to be done in order to improve the quality of their writing. I tried to do it implicitly via the comments I made by signalling out that a certain phrase or sentence did not make sense in English. Yet, it was during the Skype conferences that the students fully understood what was wrong. At first, their tendency was to explain what they meant by writing that phrase or sentence. In most cases, they would actually translate them into their mother tongue. At that moment they would become aware that what was correct in their mother tongue was wrong in English.

It is difficult to state whether helping the students to become aware of the rhetorical differences between their mother tongue and English is possible exclusively via blogging. In

my opinion, students need to be explained this beforehand so that when it happens and somebody signals it out they understand the type of error they have committed. Without prior knowledge they do not realize what exactly is not correct. That is why the students from the focus group would explain or translate at first what they had meant by writing certain sentences. Yet, when they realized that they should not transpose the rhetorical patterns from their mother tongue into English, it became easier for them to understand this type of error when they were pointed out to in their texts.

I can say that at first I tried to implicitly develop awareness of these two approaches to writing. In this way the students managed to acquire the necessary knowledge that helped them in their writing process. They became more confident in their writing practices and it helped them to diminish their writing apprehension. Beginning with Draft 7, I tried to help the students to apply the genre approach to their writing.

It is believed that genre approach is the most suited in the context of academic and professional writing (Hyland, 1999, 2003, 2007; Bhatia, 1999; Bruce, 2011; Cheng, 2006). Its primary focus is to make the students aware of the characteristics of academic writing and help the students to apply them appropriately in their writing. As the purpose of blogging was not teaching academic writing but assisting the students in the development of their academic writing skills, I tried implicitly to introduce them to genre approach.

The results show that the students need more attention to be devoted to genre approach. It is its systematic use that will be resultative. The students tried to deconstruct the text, yet they paid little attention to this process. Moreover, in doing so they did not work as a group, i.e. collectively. Each of them deconstructed the text, paying little attention to the answers given by their peers. So instead of engaging in a virtual discussion of the characteristic features of an academic text, they individually pointed to some features. In most of the cases they pointed to the same features. It implies that they did not do an in-depth analysis of the examined text. This made me assume that genre approach to writing should be explicitly explained to the students.

It should be noted, however, that even their rather superficial attitude towards this approach was resultative. It was applied particularly to short-story analysis. As it turned out this was the only case where the students knew what knowledge they were expected to share, yet they did not know how to organise their text appropriately. By deconstructing the given samples of analyses they were able to determine how to organise their own writing.

The results allows to assume that while encouraging students to post their writing, the process approach is the one that would be implicitly used. Moreover, it will develop the students' awareness of the writing process. Yet, assistance will be needed when applying genre approach to writing as well as when developing awareness of the existing difference in the rhetorical patterns between the students' mother tongue and the foreign language.

8.5.2 Teacher's Role

The experiment was designed to minimize the teacher's presence in the process of developing academic writing skills. Yet, the results show that the instructor's presence is crucial. Due to the fact that the students have underdeveloped academic writing skills they lack confidence in writing for academic purposes. Similarly, their constant need for approval from a voice who has 'authority' in their opinion also makes the teacher's presence necessary in the process.

I observed that the students felt more empowered if the teacher was part of their small discourse community. Thus, the mere fact of knowing that their teacher is both reading and reacting to their writing enhances their motivation. They might not necessarily find the process of writing easier, but they seem to find it more meaningful. They actually can see that academic writing is a reciprocal act of communication, where all the participants are involved, and where their voice is considered.

The teacher's role is also important as the students see in him/her first of all the one who will grade their writing. Blogging offers the possibility to change this one-sided perception. The students do not think of their instructor as the one who will grade their work, but as the one who enters the dialogue to improve their writing and ultimately grade their work. This addition is essential in diminishing writing apprehension and boosting motivation.

I might assume that if the students' academic writing skills had been more developed, my presence might have been even less necessary. Instead they would have relied more on their peers' opinion as they would have acknowledged them as sharing the same degree of 'authority' in academic writing.

However, I was present in the process more than initially planned as the students constantly needed to be reassured and encouraged. Moreover, the Skype conferences intended exclusively for observation, turned into virtual classrooms due to the fact that the students asked concrete

questions regarding their academic writing. As they wanted to improve their writing they needed more explanations. I had to answer questions as they perceived me above all as a teacher of academic writing. This leads to the assumption that self-correction is not the best strategy to be applied by the teacher in this particular context. Students should not be hinted at the mistakes, they should be told exactly what is wrong and what should be done to improve their writing.

That was one of the biggest problem in the student-teacher academic communication via the written text. The students were graded without actually knowing why they got that particular grade. They did not know what was wrong in their writing and what needed improvement. So this non-reciprocal communication was discouraging, and as a consequence increasing writing apprehension.

Thus it becomes essential to create a comfortable atmosphere for the enhancement of academic writing skills. Blogging seems to offer this context for both teachers and students. The role of the teacher can gradually diminish together with the development of the students' academic writing skills.

8.5.3 Student's Role

The students need to be encouraged to take responsibility of their own learning. It is a tedious process not willingly embraced, in particular by the 'authority-oriented' type of learners as the results of the experiment show. That is why it is necessary to scaffold the development of writing skills at the beginning so that the students can gradually control their own learning and cease to view the teacher as the only 'authoritative' voice to be considered.

Indeed, by the end of the experiment I can say that the students' role has become more prominent in the learning process. They became more confident and were not afraid to assume certain risks. In my opinion, this was the result of posting their works not to be graded but to be improved. As they observed each other's progress they started to trust each other's opinion more. Hence, communication among their small discourse community appeared where they shared knowledge with the ultimate goal to improve their academic writing skills.

Students need to trust themselves more. Posting their writing online can contribute to the development of confidence as aspiring academic writers. In this way the fear of public opinion will diminish and the students will be able to focus more on the writing process itself. They

will cease to think of writing as a product they need to imitate. Instead they will develop awareness of the writing process and will become able to observe their own development.

8.6 Critical Aspects of the Use of Blogs

The results have definitely shown the benefits of using blogs to develop the students' academic writing skills. Yet, there were two major factors hampering the smooth progression of the use of blogs:

- 1 physical;
- 2 psychological.

The biggest physical problem was in the fact that sometimes technology was not working well. The students always had access to internet and a computer where they could work. Yet, maintaining a blog turned problematic to some of them at first. There is the possibility to create a blog either on WordPress or blogger. As I did not want to restrict their choice the students were invited to create their blogs where they liked. As a result three blogs were created on blogger, the other three on WordPress.

At the beginning the students faced challenges in maintaining the blogs appropriately. One student could not organise the text with indentations. Some students could not understand how to allow the peers to leave their comments without their moderation. It turned that students having an account on WordPress could not leave their comments on posts to blogs from blogger. One student sent her comment to her peer via email, and she later on posted in the commentary section mentioning that it was the comment of S2. I think this can be the major problem that stood in the way of peer commenting. The students could not understand why spent so much effort if they had access to other means of giving their feedback.

I think creating all the blogs on only one site can be a solution to this problem. The students can assist each other in finding the optimal way to make their blogs work. When they have different sites they might not know exactly how to make the necessary changes. As a result their feedback is sporadic and they might give up leaving comments altogether.

The biggest psychological problem the students have is the fear of failure. Failing in their opinion was to make 'many' mistakes and to expose them to the public opinion. This explains their hesitancy at the beginning of the experiment. They thought they were making a lot of mistakes and felt guilty for doing them. They were afraid of being judged by the public which

basically consisted of their peers. So they were afraid in a way to expose to each other. They did not want their peers to believe their writing was a failure.

It is therefore important for the teacher to create a pleasant working atmosphere. The students need to understand that what they are going to do by using blogs is to assist each other in their learning process. They are going together to develop their academic writing skills. The moment this becomes clear to them, they engage in a sort of competition where they try to prove their self-worth. Indeed, the biggest achievement that blogging can offer is to prove to oneself that they can write appropriate texts for academic purposes. In addition they also prove their worth to their public, i.e. to their small discourse community, strengthening in this way their sense of affiliation.

I would also like to mention here the problem that the teachers might encounter when deciding to integrate technology into the teaching process. The results from the questionnaire show that they seemed to positively respond to the use of blogging to enhance academic writing skills. Yet, their own reluctance to implement this tool in their teaching practice was perceived in their answers. One factor is that it is time consuming, the other is that they do not exactly know in what way technology can help. I would like to cite one teacher's answer here:

‘Technology allows people getting information and contacting with each other, however the same can be done with the help of reading quality books and contacting face to face. I am not against technology, I am more for it rather than against, but it is only another means of doing things which people used to do without technology a century ago. I suppose that today we lack more human contact, exchange of ideas in face’.

What she actually does is acknowledging the existing problem in the student-teacher communication. Yet, she speaks here about other type of lack of human contact. I want to clarify that students are successful in developing oral communication skills during their practical classes of English as well as during theoretical courses. They actually talk a lot. What they do not manage to properly develop are academic writing skills. The major cause of their underdeveloped skills is to be found in the lack of teacher-student communication. Blogging offers the context for this communication to take place.

I would like to clarify once again that I do not blame the teachers for refusing to communicate with their students. They lack time, academic writing is not included in the curriculum, and their focus is not to teach the students how and what to write. Yet, they need to reconsider their attitude regarding technology implementation in their teaching practice. As

stated, blogging is not meant to replace the teacher, in this particular case it helped the students to communicate with the person they thought to be their teacher, and thus make their writing more purposeful. They managed to feel part of a small discourse community where they shared and reacted to academic texts.

8.7 Limitations of the Study

As the research I conducted was a small-scale context-bound action research, there are reasons that limit the applicability of this study to all undergraduate students and their foreign language academic writing experience.

This study reflects my experience and the undergraduate's experience with the use of blogs. The problems stated in the research are characteristic of the particular university both the undergraduates and I were affiliated to. Thus, readers interested in this topic need to determine whether such problems are typical of their higher education institutions.

Although this study has limitations on generalizability of findings because the context will differ in other cases, it can be transferable to other settings taking into account the degree of possible similarity. As doing qualitative research implies providing thick descriptions where the context, the participants and the results are closely observed, I think that readers who might be interested in applying the suggestions from the study can determine if they can apply my findings to their own context. It is my believe that the findings from this study can elucidate some common issues related to academic writing, whereas the use of blogs needs to be seriously considered as a solution that might solve some of the common struggles students face.

8.8 Implication of the Study for Further Research and Practice

The conducted study is a preliminary investigation into the problems of academic writing faced by undergraduate students who have to write in English, on the one hand, and into the possible use of blogs to help the students develop their academic writing skills, on the other. As stated the findings cannot be generalised; yet, the research has helped to identify certain critical benefits as well as problems related to the use of blogs. All this considered offers several several main directions to pursue for future research on using blogs for academic writing.

One area of interest is related to peer commenting enhancement. As seen in the present study the students did not eagerly engage in correcting their peers' posts. An in-depth research is need to determine the cause of their unwillingness and find a possible solution to this problem. It would be interesting to note if this problem is related to the types of learners, i.e. to determine if this is a characteristic of 'authority-oriented' learners and cannot be said to be valid for other types of learners.

Another area of interest is to investigate the use of blogs taking into consideration the undergraduates' level of language proficiency. The idea is to understand for what students the use of blogs is most beneficial. It is important to know if blogs could be applied at all levels and if they will have positive impact to all the students involved.

It is also worth investigating if blogging could be used among different English departments from different universities, thus forming a larger discourse community. It is interesting to observe the way students who do not know each other interact and the way they manage to assist each other in the process of writing for academic purposes.

I also believe that special research needs to be devoted in defining what approach to writing is best suited for the use of blogs. What strategies the teacher should apply in order to help the students to develop their academic writing skills. It is also crucial to determine if there is a possibility to diminish the teacher's presence in the process, and as a consequence boost autonomous learning.

Another possible research area can be to determine what can be done to change the instructors' attitude towards the use of technology both inside and outside the classroom. It is worth determining why having a positive attitude towards the use of blogs for example, they are reluctant to integrate technology in the teaching process.

In regards to implications for practice, several suggestions can be formulated. First of all, the examined curricula have shown that not much attention is devoted to developing academic writing skills, although the students have to produce a substantial number of papers related to academic purposes. Hence there is a need for a class in academic writing. This class should introduce the students to the fundamentals of academic writing so that they understand what academic writing is, how it should be structured, and what knowledge needs to be communicated. It is during this class that they need to be introduced to the use of blogs as a means of enhancing their academic communication via their posts and encourage peer-commenting.

It is also important that the potential teacher in academic writing determine what the other teachers' discipline related requirements in writing are. In this way the students will be prepared to respond to the assigned tasks in written. It needs to be kept in mind that co-teaching should be viewed as a perquisite in EAP contexts. In this way the teacher in academic writing will be able to assist better the students in their development of academic writing skills. I also believe that he/she needs to blend several approaches to writing in order to create the optimal context for the writing to take place.

Similarly it is crucial to allocate enough time for the teacher of academic writing. He/she will have to deal with an enormous amount of writing material, to which he/she is expected to respond. Otherwise, the lack of communication will surface again as a major problem in the students' writing apprehension.

Moreover, helping students to develop academic writing skills should be integrated in the practical classes of English. For example the students from the focus group knew rather well what knowledge they should communicate in the case of short-story analyses, a skill which was developed during the practical classes of English. Yet, they lacked this knowledge when they had to produce other types of academic writing. It implies that time should be carefully considered so that all areas are covered.

I think that this might lead to making the writing process for academic purposes more motivational. The students will become more confident as academic writers and will feel more at ease to leave their feedback to their peers' posts. They will also gain authority whose voice will be considered among their discourse community. As a result they will assist each other in their academic writing and contribute to each other's development of academic writing skills.

Conclusions

This research study was designed to understand the reasons why undergraduate students find it difficult to produce coherent and cohesive texts for academic purposes. Similarly it aimed to determine whether blogging can be used as a pedagogical tool to help the students to develop their academic writing skills in English.

As seen, students are expected to produce a substantial number of written works for academic purposes. It is a part of their academic education (Bjork and Raisanen, 2003; Bruce, 2011; Hyland, 2009b; Swales and Feeak, 1994). Although the enhancement of this skill seems to be crucial to the students' academic development, the results have shown that little attention is devoted to teaching this particular skill to undergraduate students.

The overall analysis of the questionnaires has also shown that students do not quite understand what academic writing is. Failing to understand its characteristics and purpose, they tend to approach the writing process superficially. The students prefer to focus on tasks that do not require much effort. That explains why their academic writing skills are not properly developed, and as a consequence they are not able to produce appropriate papers.

One of the students' problems is that they cannot clearly understand the purpose of academic writing. They have to write, yet they do not fully understand why. Hence they become less motivated, and even the extrinsic motivation of getting a grade seems not to be enough to change their attitude towards academic writing.

The analysis of the questionnaires has also clearly shown the great impact the World Wide Web has on the respondents' lives and their academic habits. The favourable attitude they have concerning the use of information technology to develop academic writing skills has allowed us to assume that they might consider blogging as a useful tool to create a small community where they would be able to communicate and share their knowledge and thoughts.

Another issue that has emerged during the experiment is that lack of communication between the teachers and the students hampers the development of academic writing skills. As the student do not clearly understand what is expected from them they are not able to produce appropriate written texts. They need assistance which is not given because of lack of time. Hence, the process of writing becomes tiresome and demotivating.

The use of blogs for academic writing tasks seems to provide the context for this interaction to take place. As their writing skills are rather underdeveloped, the teacher's assistance might be needed more often at the beginning.

Thus, we can assume that if the blogging practice were integrated into the curriculum, the students could manage to create their micro-discourse community where they would share knowledge and thoughts. It would also create the platform for their interactions on an academic level to take place. Gradually, the role of the teacher would diminish, whereas the students would become both more confident and competent. The teacher would be the one scaffolding the process of developing academic writing skills. We may assume that if the students get used to this practice the teacher's presence might be on request. If for example there is something which is unclear, the students will address the teacher.

The conclusion is in the form of a hypothesis as the time limitation of the experiment did not allow us to determine if this be possible. Yet, we may assume that blogging can be used as a tool to communicate, to compare one's work with another's, whereas the practice of sharing and peer-commenting could enhance the students' academic writing skills.

We would like to list again the main benefits the use of blogs seemed to have on the students in our study. Thus blogging:

- helps the students become aware of the writing process;
- helps to develop reader awareness;
- creates the environment for learner autonomy and boosts collaborative learning;
- makes writing more interactive;
- makes writing more purposeful increasing the students' intrinsic motivation.

In this research the use of blogs seemed to be beneficial for students. Yet two major problems in the use of blogs were signalled out. The first one is physical (sometimes the computers do not work or the internet connection drops), the second is psychological (students are afraid to share their work online, or it is difficult for them to overcome the fear of commenting a peer's post, or they are afraid of failure). It is the psychological problem which forms the affective filter that needs to be tackled first and foremost. By constant encouragement and support the affective filter will be diminished and students will feel more confident as aspiring academic writers.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- ANGOURI, J., (2010), Quantitative, Qualitative or Both? Combining Methods in Linguistic Research, in L. Litosseliti, (Ed.), *Research Methods in Linguistics*, London and New York, Continuum.
- APPLEBEE, A. N., (1986), Problems in process approaches: Toward a reconceptualization of process instruction, in A. R. Petrovsky & D. Bartholomae (Eds.), *The teaching of writing. Eighty-fifth yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education. Part II* (pp. 95-113). Chicago, Illinois: The University of Chicago Press.
- ATKINSON, D., (2003), L2 writing in the post-process era: Introduction, in *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 12, 3–15.
- ATKINSON, D., (2003), Writing and culture in the post-process era, in *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 12, 49–64.
- AUSTIN, J. L., (1962), *How to Do Things with Words*, London: Oxford University Press.
- BAILEY, S., (2011), *Academic Writing: A Handbook for International Students*, Third edition, London and New York, Routledge.
- BAKHTIN, M., (1993), *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, University of Minnesota Press.
- BALBONI, P. E., (2012a), Etica e glottotecnologie, in F. Caon, G. Serragiotto, (Eds.), *Tecnologie e didattica delle lingue: Teorie risorse, sperimentazioni*, Torino, UTET Università, 33-48.
- BALBONI, P. E., (2012b), *Le sfide di Babele: insegnare le lingue nelle società complesse*, Terza edizione, Torino, UTET Università.
- BALBONI, P. E., (2012c), 'Educazione linguistica: coordinate epistemologiche ed etiche per una nuova rivista' in *Educazione Linguistica. Language Education*, n. 1.
<http://edizionicf.unive.it/index.php/ELLE/article/view/92/52>.
- BALBONI, P. E., (2007), *Operational Models for Language Education*, Perugia, Guerra Edizioni.
- BALBONI, P. E., (2006), *The Epistemological Nature of Language Teaching Methodology*, Perugia, Guerra Edizioni.

- BALBONI, P. E., (2006), *Intercultural Communicative Competence: A Model*, Perugia, Guerra Edizioni.
- BEATTY, K., (2010), *Teaching and Researching Computer-Assisted Language Learning*, Second Edition, London, Pearson Education Limited.
- BELCHER, D., (2014), What we need and don't need intercultural rhetoric for: A retrospective and prospective look at an evolving research area, in *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 25, 59–67.
- BHATIA, V. K., (1993), *Analysing Genre: Language use in Professional Settings*, London, Continuum.
- BHATIA, V. K., (1999), Integrating products, processes, purposes and participants in professional writing, in C.N. Candlin and K. Hyland (eds), *Writing: Texts, Processes and Practices*, London and New York, Longman, 21 – 39.
- BHATIA, V. K., (2004), *Worlds of written discourse*, London and New York, Continuum.
- BJORK, L., RAISANEN, C., (2003), *Academic writing: A university writing course*, Lund: Studentlitteratur.
- BLOOD, R., (2002), *The weblog handbook: Practical advice on creating and maintaining your blog*, Cambridge, MA: Perseus Publishing.
- BONK, C., J., (2009), *The World Is Open: How Web Technology Is Revolutionizing Education*, San Francisco, Jossey-Bass A Wiley Imprint.
- BRENTON, S., (2009), E-learning – an introduction, in H. Fry, St. Ketteridge, St. Marshall, (Eds.), *A handbook for teaching and learning in higher education : enhancing academic practice, Third Edition*, London and New York, Routledge.
- BROWN, H. D., (2000), *Teaching by Principles. An Interactive Approach to Language Pedagogy, Second Edition*, Pearson Education Limited.
- BRUCE, I., (2011), *Theory and Concepts of English for Academic Purposes*, Palgrave Macmillan.
- BRUCE, I., (2013), A role for genre-based pedagogy in academic writing instruction?: an EAP perspective, Retrieved November 10, 2015, from <http://www.textjournal.com.au/speciss/issue21/Bruce.pdf>.

- BRUNI, F., (2013), Web e didattica: blog, social network, wiki, in G. Fiorentino, F. Bruni (Eds.), *Didattica e tecnologie*, Roma, Carocci editori, 75-97.
- BUSA, M. G., (2007), in *New Perspectives in Teaching Pronunciation* A. Baldry, M. Pavesi, C. T. Torsello, Chr. Taylor, (Eds.), *From Didactas to Ecolingua: An Ongoing Research Project on Translation and Corpus Linguistics*, Trieste, EUT.
- CABURLOTTO, F., (2012), Le nuove potenzialità glottodidattiche del computer e della rete, in F. Caon, G. Serragiotto, (Eds.), *Tecnologie e didattica delle lingue: Teorie risorse, sperimentazioni*, Torino, UTET Università, 49-56.
- CAMPBELL, A. P., (2003), Weblogs for use with ESL classes, in *The Internet TESL Journal*, Vol. IX, Retrieved September 17, 2013, from <http://iteslj.org/Techniques/Campbell-Weblogs.html>.
- CANALE, M., (1983), From communicative competence to communicative language pedagogy, in J. C. Rithards and R. W. Schmidt, (Eds.), *Language and communication*, London, Longman, 2-27.
- CANALE, M., SWAIN, M., (1980), Theoretical Bases of Communicative Approaches to Second Language Teaching and Testing, in *Applied Linguistics*, 1, 1-47.
- CANDLIN, C. N., HYLAND, K., (Eds.), (1999), *Writing: Texts, Processes and Practices*, London and New York, Longman.
- CAON, F., (2012), Tecnologie e insegnamento/apprendimento linguistico, in F. Caon, G. Serragiotto, (Eds.), *Tecnologie e didattica delle lingue: Teorie risorse, sperimentazioni*, Torino, UTET Università, 5-32.
- CAON, F., (2006), *Pleasure in Language Learning: A Methodological Challenge*, Perugia, Guerra Edizioni.
- CAON, F., SERRAGIOTTO, G., (Eds.), (2012), *Tecnologie e didattica delle lingue: Teorie risorse, sperimentazioni*, Torino, UTET Università.
- CARR, W., KEMMIS, S., (1986), *Becoming Critical: Knowing Through Action Research*, Lewes, Falmer Press.

- CARRIÓ-PASTORA, M. L., ROMERO-FORTEZAB, F., (2014), Second Language Writing: use of the World Wide Web to Improve Specific Writing, in *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 116, 235 – 239.
- CARROLL, J. A., WILSON, E. E., (1993), *Acts of teaching: how to teach writing*, Englewood, Teacher Ideas Press.
- CASANAVE, C. P., (2003), Looking ahead to more sociopolitically-oriented case study research in L2 writing scholarship (But should it be called “post-process”?), in *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 12, 85–102.
- CHENG, A., (2006), Understanding learners and learning in ESP genre-based writing instruction, in *English for Specific Purposes*, 25, 76–89.
- CHOMSKY N., HAUSER M. D., TECUMSEH FITCH W., (2002), “The Faculty of Language: What Is It, Who Has It, and How Did It Evolve?”, in *Neuroscience*, n. 298.
<http://www.chomsky.info/articles/20021122.pdf>.
- CELCE-MURCIA, M., OLSHTAIN, E., (2000), *Discourse and Context in Language Teaching: A Guide for Language teaching*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- CELCE-MURCIA, M., DORNYEI, Z., THURRELL, S., (1995), A pedagogical framework for communicative competence: A pedagogically motivated model with content specifications, in *Issues in Applied Linguistics*, 6(2), 5-35.
- CHERRY, N., (2002), *Action Research: a pathway to action, knowledge and learning*, Melbourne, RMIT University Press.
- CLARK, I. L., (2012), *Concepts in composition: theory and practice in the teaching of writing; with contributors, Betty Bamberg ... [et all], — 2nd ed.*, New York, Routledge.
- COHEN, E., KRISHNAMURTHY, B., (2006), *A short walk in the Blogistan*, in *Computer Networks*, 50, 615–630.
- CONDRAT, V., (2016), Meeting the challenges of writing a research paper in a foreign language, in *Relevanța și calitatea formării universitare: competențe pentru present și viitor – Materialele conferinței științifice internaționale, Vol I, Bălți, Tipografia Universității de State ”Alec Russo” din Bălți*, 86-89.

- CONDRAT, V., (2015), Academic Writing as an Interactive Process, in *Orientari actuale in cercetarea doctorala – Materialele colocviilor stiintifice ale doctoranzilor din 13 decembrie 2013 si 18 decembrie 2014*, Bălți, Tipogr. ‘Indigou Color’, 206-212.
- CONDRAT, V., (2014), The Use of Technology to Promote Learner Autonomy, in *Creativitatea lingvala: de la semn la text*, Iași, Editura PIM.
- CONDRAT, V., (2013), The Role of Cohesion in Written Discourse, in *Analele Universității „Stefan cel Mare” Suceava Seria Filologie A. Lingvistică*, Suceava, Editura Universității din Suceava, 28-37.
- CONDRAT, V., (2012), Combining Face-to-Face and Online Learning of the Future Teachers of Foreign Languages, in *Integrarea specialistului cu studii superioare pe piața muncii: aspecte naționale și internaționale*, Bălți, Presa univ. bălțeană, 138-139.
- COOK, G., (2000), *Discourse*, Oxford, Oxford University Press.
- CONNOR, U., (1996), *Contrastive Rhetoric: Cross-Cultural Aspects of Second Language Writing*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- CONNOR, U., (2008), Mapping multidimensional aspects of research: Reaching to intercultural rhetoric, in Connor, U., Nagelhout, E., Rozycki, W. V., (Eds.), (2008), *Contrastive Rhetoric: Reaching to intercultural rhetoric*, Amsterdam / Philadelphia, John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- CONNOR, U., NAGELHOUT, E., ROZYCKI, W. V., (Eds.), (2008), *Contrastive Rhetoric: Reaching to intercultural rhetoric*, Amsterdam / Philadelphia, John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- COULTHARD, M., (1985), *An Introduction to Discourse Analysis, Second Edition*, Harlow, Longman Group UK Limited.
- CRESWELL, J. W., (2007), *Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches*, Thousand Oaks, London, New Delhi, Sage Publications.
- CRYSTAL, D., (2001), *Language and the Internet*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- CUTTING, J., (2002), *Pragmatics and discourse: a resource book for students*, London, Routledge.

- DELUCA, G., FOX, L., JOHNSON, M.-A., KOGEN, M. (Eds.), (2002), *Dialogue on writing: Rethinking ESL, basic writing, and first-year composition*, Mahwah, New Jersey, Lawrence Erlbaum.
- DOHN, N. B., (2010), *Teaching with wikis and blogs: Potentials and pitfalls*, Retrieved November 11, 2014 from, <http://www.lancaster.ac.uk/fss/organisations/netlc/past/nlc2010/abstracts/PDFs/Dohn.pdf>.
- DONALDSON, R. P., HAGGSTROM, M. A., (Eds.), (2006), *Changing Language Education Through CALL*, London and New York, Routledge.
- DONNELLY, R., MCSWEENEY, F., (Eds.), (2009), *Applied E-Learning and E-Teaching in Higher Education*, Hershey, New York, Information Science Reference.
- DOOLITTLE, P.E., HICKS, D., (2003), Constructivism as a theoretical foundation for the use of technology in social studies, in *Theory and Research in Social Education*, 31(1), 72-104.
- DORNYEI, Z., (2007), *Research Methods in Applied Linguistics: Quantitative, Qualitative, and Mixed Methodologies*, Oxford, Oxford University Press.
- DU, H. S., WAGNER, C., (2006), Weblog success: Exploring the role of technology, in *International Journal of Human-Computer Studies*, 64, 789–798.
- ELBOW, P., (1981), *Writing with power: Techniques for mastering the writing process*, New York, Oxford University Press.
- EVANS, M., (2009), Digital technology and language learning: a review of policy and research evidence, in M. J. Evans (Ed.), *Foreign-Language Learning with Digital Technology*, London and New York, Continuum, 9-31.
- EVANS, M. J., (Ed.), (2009), *Foreign-Language Learning with Digital Technology*, London and New York, Continuum.
- EUROPEAN COMMISSION, 2010, Common European Principles for Teacher Competences and Qualifications, Retrieved November 23, 2015, from, http://www.atee1.org/uploads/EUpolicies/common_eur_principles_en.pdf.

- EWALD, H. R., (1999), A tangled Web of discourses: On post-process pedagogy and communicative interaction, in T. Kent, (Ed.), *Post-process theory: Beyond the writing-process paradigm*, Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press Mahwah, 116-131.
- FAVARO, L., (2012), Tecnologie e ragazzi “fuori” della scuola: un punto di partenza per riflettere sull’introduzione delle tecnologie nei contesti formali di insegnamento, in F. Caon, G. Serragiotto, (Eds.), *Tecnologie e didattica delle lingue: Teorie risorse, sperimentazioni*, Torino, UTET Università, 69-83.
- FAVARO, L., SANDRINI, I., (2012), Materiali e applicativi web per la didattica delle lingue, in F. Caon, G. Serragiotto, (Eds.), *Tecnologie e didattica delle lingue: Teorie risorse, sperimentazioni*, Torino, UTET Università, 224-247.
- FELLNER, T., APPLE, M., (2006), Developing writing fluency and lexical complexity with blogs, in *The JALT CALL Journal* 2, 1, 15-26.
- FIORENTINO, G., (2013), Tecnologie per educare, in G. Fiorentino, F. Bruni (Eds.), *Didattica e tecnologie*, Roma, Carocci editori, 14 – 21.
- FIORENTINO, G., BRUNI, F., (Eds.), (2013), *Didattica e tecnologie*, Roma, Carocci editori.
- FLOWER, L., HAYES, J., (1981), A cognitive process theory of writing, in *College Composition and Communication*, 32, 365–387.
- FLOWERDEW, J., PEACOCK, M., (2001), *Research Perspectives on English for Academic Purposes*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- FRY, H., KETTERIDGE, St., MARSHALL, St., (Eds.), (2009), *A handbook for teaching and learning in higher education : enhancing academic practice, Third Edition*, London and New York, Routledge.
- FRYDRYCHOVA KLIMOVA, B., (2014), Approaches to the teaching of writing skills, in *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences* 112, 147 – 151.
- FULWILER, T., (2002), The Argument for Writing Across the Curriculum, in G. Deluca, L. Fox, M.-A. Johnson, M. Kogen, (Eds.), *Dialogue on writing: Rethinking ESL, basic writing, and first-year composition*, Mahwah, New Jersey, Lawrence Erlbaum.
- GONG, J., (2002), The employment of CALL in teaching second/foreign language speaking, Retrieved April 25, 2012, from

http://education.unimelb.edu.au/research/resources/student_res/postscriptfiles/vol3/vol3_1_gong1.pdf.

GRABE, W., KAPLAN, R.B., (Eds.), (1998), *Theory and Practice of Writing: An Applied Linguistic Perspective*, Harlow, Longman.

HEGELHEIMER, V., FISHERCALICO, D., (2006), Grammar, Writing, and Technology: A Sample Technology-supported Approach to Teaching Grammar and Improving Writing for ESL Learners, in *CALICO Journal*, 23, (2), 1-23, Retrieved November 10, 2015, from https://calico.org/html/article_116.pdf.

HASHEMNEZHAD, H., HASHEMNEZHAD, N., (2012), A Comparative Study of Product, Process, and Post-process Approaches in Iranian EFL Students' Writing Skill, Retrieved September 23, 2015, from <http://ojs.academypublisher.com/index.php/jltr/article/viewFile/jltr0304722729/5001>.

HINKEL, E., (2004), *Teaching Academic ESL writing: practical techniques in vocabulary and grammar*, Mahwah, New Jersey and London, Lawrence Earlbaum Associates.

HOGUE, A., OSHIMA, A., *Introduction to Academic Writing*, Third Edition, New York, Person Education, Inc.

HOOPER, S., RIEBER, L. P., (1995), Teaching with Technology, in A. C. Ornstein, (Ed.), *Teaching: Theory into Practice*, Needham Heights, MA, Allyn and Bacon. 154-170.

HOUNSELL, D., (2005), "Contrasting conceptions of essay-writing", in F. Marton, D. Hounsell, and N. Entwistle, (Eds.), *The Experience of Learning: Implications for teaching and studying in higher education*, 3rd (Internet) edition. Edinburgh, University of Edinburgh, Centre for Teaching, Learning and Assessment, 106-125.

HOFER, M., SWAN, K., (2006), Standards, firewalls, and general classroom mayhem: Implementing student-centered technology projects in the elementary classroom, in *Social Studies Research and Practice*, 1(1), Retrieved September 25, 2015, from <http://www.socstrp.org/>.

HUBERMAN, A. M., MILES, M. B., (1994), Data management and analysis methods, in N. K. Denzin and Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research*, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 428-444.

- HYLAND, K., (2009a), *Academic Discourse: English in a Global Context*, London and New York, Continuum International Publishing Group.
- HYLAND, K., (2009b), *Teaching and Researching Writing*, Second Edition, Harlow, Pearson Education Limited.
- HYLAND, K., (2007), Genre pedagogy: Language, literacy and L2 writing instruction, in *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 16, 148–164.
- HYLAND, K., (2006), *English for Academic Purposes: An advanced resource book*, London and New York, Routledge.
- HYLAND, K., (2003), Genre-based pedagogies: A social response to process, in *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 12, 17–29.
- HYLAND, K., (2002), Authority and invisibility: authorial identity in academic writing, in *Journal of Pragmatics* 34, 1091–1112.
- HYLAND, K., (1999), Disciplinary discourses: writer stance in research articles, in C. N. Candlin and K. Hyland, (Eds), *Writing: Texts, Processes and Practices*, London and New York, Longman, 99 – 121.
- HYLAND, K., HAMP-LYONS, L., (2002), EAP: issues and directions, in *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, 1, 1–12.
- HYMES, D.H., (1972), On communicative competence, in Pride, J.B., Holmes, J., *Sociolinguistics: selected readings*. Harmondsworth, Penguin, 269–293.
- IVANIC, R., (1998), *Writing and Identity: The discursual construction of identity in academic writing*, Amsterdam and Philadelphia, John Benjamins Publishing Co.
- IVANIC, R., WELDON, S., (1999), Researching the writer – reader relationship, in C. N. Candlin and K. Hyland (Eds.), *Writing: Texts, Processes and Practices*, London and New York, Longman, 168 – 192.
- JARVIS, P., (2006), *The Theory and Practice of Teaching, Second Edition*, London and New York, Routledge.
- JOHNS, A. M., (1995), Genre and pedagogical purposes, in *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 4, 181–190.

- JORDAN, R. R., (1997), *English for Academic Purposes: A guide and resource book for teachers*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- KAPLAN, R., (1997), Contrastive Rhetoric, in T. Miler (Ed.), *Functional Approaches to Written Text: Classroom Applications*, Washington, DC, United States Information Agency.
- KASTMAN BREUCH, L.-A. M., (2002), Post-Process “Pedagogy”: A Philosophical Exercise, Retrieved September 23, 2015, from <http://www.jaconlinejournal.com/archives/vol22.1/breuch-postprocess.pdf>.
- KENT, T., (Ed.), (1999), *Post-process theory: Beyond the writing-process paradigm*, Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press.
- KAVALIAUSKIENĖ, G., ANUSIENĖ, L., MAŽEIKIENĖ, V., (2006a), Application of Blogging for Learner Development, Retrieved December 12, 2015, from: http://webpace.buckingham.ac.uk/kbernhardt/journal/jllearn/4_2/LEARN1.pdf.
- KAVALIAUSKIENĖ, G., ANUSIENĖ, L., MAŽEIKIENĖ, V., (2006b), Weblogging: Innovation for Communication in English Class, Retrieved December 12, 2015, from: <http://e-flt.nus.edu.sg/v3n22006/kavali.pdf>.
- KROLL, B., (Ed.), (1990), *Second Language Writing: Research insights for the classroom*, New York, Cambridge University Press.
- KRUSE, O., (2003), Getting Started: Academic Writing in the First Year of a University Education, in L. Björk, G. Bräuer, L. Rienecker and S. Jörgensen (Eds.), *Teaching Academic Writing in European Higher Education*, New York, Boston, Dordrecht, London, Moscow, Kluwer Academic Publishers, 19-28.
- KUBOTA, R., (1999), Japanese culture constructed by discourses: Implications for applied linguistics research and ELT, in *TESOL Quarterly*, 33, 9–35.
- KUBOTA, R., (2001), Discursive construction of the images of US classrooms, in *TESOL Quarterly*, 35, 9–37.
- KUTEEVA, M., (2011), Wikis and academic writing: Changing the writer–reader relationship, in *English for Specific Purposes*, 30, 44–57.

- LARSEN-FREEMAN, D., (2008), *Techniques and Principles in Language Teaching, Second Edition*, Oxford, Oxford University Press.
- LARU, J., NÄYKKI, P., JÄRVELÄ, S., (2012), Supporting small-group learning using multiple Web 2.0 tools: A case study in the higher education context, in *Internet and Higher Education*, 15, 29–38.
- LEVY, M., (1997), *Computer-assisted language learning: context and conceptualization*, Oxford, New York, Oxford University Press.
- LEVY, M., (2006), Effective Use of CALL Technologies: Finding the Right Balance in R. P. Donaldson, M. A. Haggstrom, (Eds.), *Changing Language Education Through CALL*, London and New York, Routledge, 1-18.
- LEVY, M., BLIN, F., BRADIN SISKIN C., TAKEUCHI, O., (2011), *WorldCALL: international perspectives on computer-assisted language learning*, London and New York, Routledge.
- LI, M., (2012), Use of Wikis in Second/Foreign Language Classes: A Literature Review, Retrieved November 23, 2015, from http://callej.org/journal/13-1/Li_2012.pdf.
- LIDDICOAT, A. J., SCARINO, A., (2013), *Intercultural Language Teaching and Learning*, Wiley-Blackwell, A John Wiley & Sons, Ltd., Publication.
- LILLIS, Th. M., (2001), *Student writing: access, regulation, desire*, London and New York, Routledge.
- LIN, M. H., GROOM, N., LIN, C., (2013), Blog-Assisted Learning in the ESL Writing Classroom: A Phenomenological Analysis, Retrieved September 12, 2015, from: http://www.ifets.info/journals/16_3/10.pdf.
- LITOSSELITI, L., (Ed.), (2010), *Research Methods in Linguistics*, London and New York, Continuum.
- LONKA, K., (2003), Helping Doctoral Students to Finish Their Theses, in L. Björk, G. Bräuer, L. Rienecker and S. Jörgensen (Eds.), *Teaching Academic Writing in European Higher Education*, New York, Boston, Dordrecht, London, Moscow, Kluwer Academic Publishers, 113-131.

- MATSUDA, P. K., (2003), Process and post-process: A discursive history, in *Journal of Second Language Writing* 12, 65–83.
- MEZZARDI, M., (2015), *I nuovi ferri del mestiere*, Torino, Loescher Editore.
- MILER, T., Ed., (1997), *Functional Approaches to Written Text: Classroom Applications*, Washington, DC, United States Information Agency.
- MURRAY, L., HOURIGAN, T., JEANNEAU, C., (2007), Blog writing integration for academic language learning purposes: towards an assessment framework, in *IBÉRICA*, 14, 9-32.
- MYERS, G., (1999), Interaction in writing: principles and problems, in C. N. Candlin and K. Hyland (Eds.), *Writing: Texts, Processes and Practices*, London and New York, Longman, 40 – 61,
- NORTON, L. S., (2009), *Action Research in Teaching and Learning: A practical guide to conducting pedagogical research in universities*, London and New York, Routledge.
- NUNAN, D., (2005), *Designing Tasks for the Communicative Classroom*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- NUNAN, D., (1991), *Language Teaching Methodology: A textbook for teachers*, New York London Toronto Sydney Tokyo Singapore, Prentice Hall International.
- NYSTRAND, M., (1986), *The Structure of Written Communication: Studies in Reciprocity between Writers and Readers*. Orlando and London, Academic Press.
- NYSTRAND, M. (1989), A social interactive model of writing, in *Written Communication*, January, vol. 6, no. 1, SAGE Publications, 66–85.
- OLSON, G., (2002), Toward a post-process composition: Abandoning the rhetoric of assertion, in G. DeLuca, L. Fox, M.-A. Johnson, & M. Kogen (Eds.), *Dialogue on writing: Rethinking ESL, basic writing, and first-year composition*, Mahwah, New Jersey, Lawrence Erlbaum, 233-241.
- PALTRIDGE, B., (2008), *Discourse Analysis: An Introduction*, London and New York, Continuum.
- PAULSTON, Ch. B., (1992), *Linguistic and Communicative Competence: Topics in ESL*, Multilingual Matters Ltd.

- RAPOPORT, R.N., (1970), Three dilemmas of action research, in *Human Relations*, 23, 499–513.
- REPMAN, J., ZINSKIE, C., CARLSON, R. D., (2005), Effective Use of CMC Tools in Interactive Online Learning, in *Computers in the Schools*, 22(1–2), 57–69.
- RICHARDS, J. C., SCHMIDT, R., (2002), *Longman Dictionary of Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics, Third Edition*, Pearson Education Limited.
- RICHARDSON, W., (2006), *Blogs, wikis, podcasts, and other powerful web tools for classrooms*, Thousand Oaks, CA, Corwin Press.
- SCARDAMALIA, M., BEREITER, C., (1987), Knowledge telling and knowledge transforming in written composition, in S. ROSENBERG, (Ed.), *Advances in applied psycholinguistics, Volume 2: Reading, writing, and language learning*, Cambridge, New York, Cambridge University Press, 142-175.
- SEARLE, J., (1969), *Speech Acts: An Essay in the Philosophy of Language*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- SERRAGIOTTO, G., (2012), Multimedialità, interattività e formazione dei docenti, in F. Caon, G. Serragiotto, (Eds.), *Tecnologie e didattica delle lingue: Teorie, risorse, sperimentazioni*, Torino, UTET Università, 112-139.
- SHARPE, R., PAWLYN, J., (2009), The Role of the Tutor in Blended E-Learning: Experiences from Interprofessional Education, in R. Donnelly, F. McSweeney, (Eds.), *Applied E-Learning and E-Teaching in Higher Education*, Hershey, New York, Information Science Reference.
- SHIFFRIN, D., (1994), *Approaches to Discourse: Language as Social Interaction*, Massachusetts and Oxford, Wiley-Blackwell.
- SILVA, T., (1990), Second language composition instruction: developments, issues and directions in ESL, in KROLL, B., (Ed.), *Second Language Writing: Research insights for the classroom*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 11-23.
- SILVA, T., (1993), Toward an understanding of the distinct nature of L2 writing: the ESL research and its implications, in *TESOL Quarterly*, 27, 665–77.

- SMITH, M. K., (1996; 2001, 2007), Action research, in *The Encyclopedia of Informal Education*, Retrieved September 17, 2014, from: www.infed.org/research/b-actres.htm.
- SPACK, R., (1997), The rhetorical construction of multilingual students, in *TESOL Quarterly*, 31, 765–774.
- STAPLETON, P., (2010), Writing in an electronic age: A case study of L2 composing processes, in *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, 9, 295-307.
- STREVENS, P. (1988), ESP after 20 years: A reappraisal, in *ESP: State of the Art*, M. L. Tickoo (Ed.), Singapore: SEAMEO Regional Language Centre, 1-13.
- SUN, Y. C., CHANG, Y.J. (2012), Blogging to learn: becoming EFL academic writers Through collaborative dialogues, Retrieved August 26, 2015, from <http://ilt.msu.edu/issues/february2012/sunchang.pdf>.
- SUNDERLAND, J., (2010), Research Questions in Linguistics, in L. Litosseliti, (Ed.), *Research Methods in Linguistics*, London and New York, Continuum.
- SWALES, J., (1990), *Genre analysis: English in academic and research settings*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- SWALES, J. M., FEAK, Ch. B., (1994), *Academic writing for graduate students: essential tasks and skills: a course for nonnative speakers of English*, University of Michigan Press.
- SWALES, J. M., CHANG, Y.-Y., (1999), Informal elements in English academic writing: threats or opportunities for advanced non-native speakers? in C. N. Candlin and K. Hyland (Eds.), *Writing: Texts, Processes and Practices*, London and New York, Longman, 145 – 167.
- TAYLOR, B., (1981), Content and written form: A two-way street, in *TESOL Quarterly* 15, 5 – 13.
- TEKINARSLAN, E., (2008), Blogs: A qualitative investigation into an instructor and undergraduate students’ experiences, Retrieved September 23, 2015, from: <http://ajet.org.au/index.php/AJET/article/view/1200/428>.
- THE NEGLECTED “R”: The Need for a Writing Revolution, (2003), Report of the National Commission on Writing in American Schools and Colleges, Retrieved September 9,

- 2015, from
http://www.collegeboard.com/prod_downloads/writingcom/neglectedr.pdf.
- THORNTON, Geoffrey, (1980), *Teaching Writing: The Development of Written Language Skills*, Bungay, Suffolk, Edward Arnold.
- WANG, Y.-Ch., (2014), Using wikis to facilitate interaction and collaboration among EFL learners: A social constructivist approach to language teaching, in *System*, 42, 383–390.
- WANG, Sh.-K., REEVES, Th. C., (2006), The effects of a web-based learning environment on student motivation in a high school earth science course, Retrieved November 21, 2015, from
http://www.fp.ucalgary.ca/maclachlan/EDER_679.06_Fall_2008/Student_Motivation_WebLE.pdf.
- WARE, P., WARSCHAUER, M., (2006), Electronic feedback and second language writing, in K. Hyland and F. Hyland, (Eds.), *Feedback in ESL writing: Context and issues*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 105-122.
- WATSON TODD, R., (2003), EAP or TEAP?, in *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, 2, 147-156.
- WIDDOWSON, H.G., (1984), *Teaching Language as Communication*, Oxford, Oxford University Press.
- WIDDOWSON, H.G., (2007), *Discourse Analysis*, Oxford, Oxford University Press.
- WILLIAMS, J. B., JACOBS, J., (2004), Exploring the use of blogs as learning spaces in the higher education sector, Retrieved November 12, 2015, from:
<http://ajet.org.au/index.php/AJET/article/view/1361/731>.
- WINDSCHITL, M. (1998), The WWW and classroom research: What path should we take?, in *Educational Researcher*, 37 (1), 28–33.
- WRIGHT, P., (1999) Writing and information design of healthcare materials, in C. N. Candlin and K. Hyland (Eds.), *Writing: Texts, Processes and Practices*, London and New York, Longman, 85 – 98.
- WU, C., (2006), Blogs in TEFL: A New Promising Vehicle, Retrieved May 24, 2015, from,
<http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED497420.pdf>.

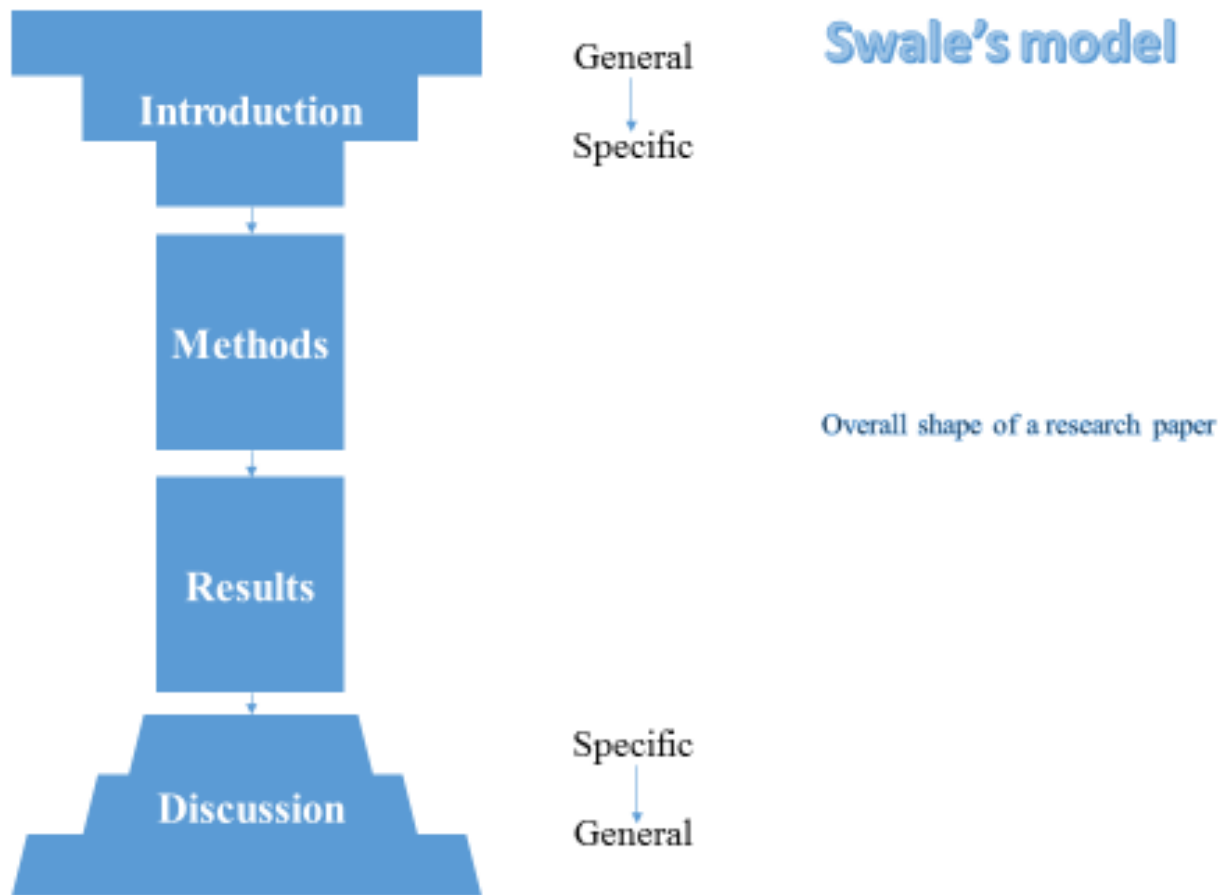
ZAMEL, V., (1997), Toward a model of transculturation, in *TESOL Quarterly*, 31, 341–352.

ZAMEL, V., (1982), Writing: The process of discovering meaning, in *TESOL Quarterly*, 16, 195–209.

ZAMEL, V., (1976), Teaching composition in the ESL classroom: What we can learn from research in the teaching of English, in *TESOL Quarterly*, 10, 67–76.

ZHANG, D., (2009), The Application of Blog in English Writing, Retrieved, March 24, 2015, from, <http://journal.acs-cam.org.uk/data/archive/2009/200901-article8.pdf>.

Appendix 1: Swale's model of a research paper



Your perspective on acquiring academic writing skills

Edit this form

Dear Student,

The questionnaire below is designed to support my research on 'Parallel Blogging as an Interactive and Motivational Pedagogical Tool to Enhance Writing Skills in EAP Contexts.' Your voluntarily assistance in completing this questionnaire is highly valued. Your responses are confidential. You can be sure that this questionnaire is for research only and that you will not be identified in any discussion of the data.

Please follow the given instructions while answering the questions.

Thank you for your collaboration.

Should you need any further information, feel free to email me: yioricacondrat79@gmail.com

* Required

Gender *

- F
 M

Age *

Numbers of years studying English as a foreign language *

Select your year of study *

- First
 Second
 Third
 Fourth

How many students are there in your group? *

Indicate the number

1. What do you write as a rule for your classes? *

You can choose more than one variant.

- Analyses
 Essays
 Reports
 Summaries
 Research papers
 Other:

2. Say what academic writing is and in what way it differs from other types of writing. *

[Empty text box]

3. How do you prepare for writing? *

- Go to the library
- Review the material
- Write a plan
- Look up reference books
- Discuss with peers
- Surf the internet
- Other:

4. What do you pay most attention to while writing for academic purposes? *

- Grammar
- Punctuation
- Spelling
- Vocabulary
- Content
- Other:

5. What do you do to improve your academic writing skills? *

- Read a lot
- Take notes
- Do many kinds of exercises
- Make up sentences with new words
- Try to get a better understanding of grammar
- Other:

5.1. Are English books in academic writing available at your University Library? *

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

6. How often do you read supplementary materials to be used in your writing? *

- Always
- Sometimes
- Rarely
- Never

7. If you use online sources for your writing which is the site you access most? *

8. I use Wikipedia for my writing tasks: *

- All the time
- Often
- Once in a while
- Rarely
- Never

9. As a rule, what do you do after writing a text? *

- Submit the text
- Ask a peer to read your text
- Leave it aside and later on re-read it
- Other:

10. Say if you agree with the following statement: Academic writing is above all an interaction between the student and the teacher. *

	Strongly agree	Partially agree	Undecided	Rather disagree	Strongly disagree
	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

11. On a five point scale, range the skills that you think you have to improve in your present academic context. *

Number 5 needs improvement most and Number 1 needs improvement least.

	1	2	3	4	5
Listening	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Reading	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Speaking	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Writing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

12. For you, writing a text in English is: *

- Very easy
- Easy
- Not that easy
- Difficult
- Very difficult

13. What stages does the academic writing process involve in your personal case? *

14. What is the most difficult part to write? *

- Introduction
- Body

Conclusions

Other:

15. The instructions you find in books in academic writing are always: *

Very clear

Clear

Vague

Unclear

Incomprehensible

16. The indications given to you by the teacher are always: *

Very clear

Clear

Vague

Unclear

Incomprehensible

17. Which of the following teaching writing techniques would you like your teacher to use in order to develop your academic writing? *

Giving all kinds of set structures to help you improve your writing

Giving clear indications on how to write your text

Examining samples of other people's writing

Offering more explanations online

Making writing more interactive with the help of internet

Other:

18. In your opinion, what does the word combination 'motivated writer' mean in an academic context? *

19. Are YOU a motivated writer in your academic context? Why? / Why not? *

20. How often do you use internet for your studies? *

Several times a day

Daily

Once a week

Once a month

Never

21. Say if you agree with the following statement: The development of academic writing skills should include the use of technology both inside and outside the classroom. *

Strongly agree Partially agree Undecided Rather disagree Strongly disagree

22. Say if you agree with the following statement: Technology can help improve your writing skills. *

Strongly agree Partially agree Undecided Rather disagree Strongly disagree

23. Please justify your answer *

24. Say if you agree with the following statement: Posting one's writing online makes the writing process more interactive. *

Strongly agree Partially agree Undecided Rather disagree Strongly disagree

25. Say if you agree with the following statement: Posting one's writing online makes the writer more responsible as to the form and contents of his/her writing. *

Strongly agree Partially agree Undecided Rather disagree Strongly disagree

26. Say if you agree with the following statement: Posting one's writing online makes the writer consider more the reader's expectations. *

Strongly agree Partially agree Undecided Rather disagree Strongly disagree

27. Do you keep a blog? *

- Yes
- No
- I have no idea what this is

28. If the answer to the above question is yes, specify why.

Submit

Never submit passwords through Google Forms.

Powered by
 Google Forms

This content is neither created nor endorsed by Google.

[Report Abuse](#) - [Terms of Service](#) - [Additional Terms](#)

Your perspective on the students' acquiring academic writing skills

Edit this form

Dear Teacher,

The questionnaire below is designed to support my research on 'Parallel Blogging as an Interactive and Motivational Pedagogical Tool to Enhance Writing Skills in EAP Contexts.' Your voluntarily assistance in completing this questionnaire is highly valued. Your responses are confidential. You can be sure that this questionnaire is for research only and that you will not be identified in any discussion of the data.

Please follow the given instructions while answering the questions.

Thank you for your collaboration.

Should you need any further information, feel free to email me: vioricacondrat79@gmail.com

* Required

Gender *

- F
 M

Age *

Place of work *

Numbers of years teaching English as a foreign language *

Types of courses taught *

1. What type of writing do you assign to your students? *

You can choose more than one variant.

- Analyses
 Essays
 Reports
 Summaries
 Research papers
 Other:

2. Do your students understand the difference between academic writing and other types of writing? *

3. In your opinion, how do students prepare for writing? *

- Very carefully
- Carefully
- Occasionally
- Carelessly
- Other:

4. While checking the students' writing, what do you pay most attention to? *

- Grammar
- Punctuation
- Spelling
- Vocabulary
- Content
- Other:

5. In your opinion, what is the best way to enhance academic writing skills? To make the student: *

- Read a lot
- Learn grammar rules
- Take notes
- Do many kinds of exercises
- Make up sentences with new words
- Other:

6. How often do you encourage them to read supplementary materials to use in their writing? *

- Always
- Sometimes
- Rarely
- Never

7. If they use online sources for their writing, which is the site they access most? *

8. From your experience, how often do they use Wikipedia for their writing tasks? *

- All the time
- Often
- Once in a while
- Never

9. Do you encourage the students to peer read their papers? *

Please explain why / why not.

10. Say if you agree with the following statement: Academic writing is above all an interaction between the student and the teacher. *

Strongly agree	Partially agree	Undecided	Rather disagree	Strongly disagree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

11. On a five point scale, range the skills that you focus most in your practical class of English. *

Number 5 is the most important and Number 1 is the least important.

	1	2	3	4	5
Listening	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Reading	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Speaking	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Writing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

12. From your experience, writing a text in English for your students is: *

- Very easy
- Easy
- Not that easy
- Difficult
- Very difficult

13. What advice do you give your students to organize better the process of writing: *

- Plan
- Note take
- Brainstorm
- Discuss with peers
- Discuss with me
- Other:

14. What part of their writing is, as a rule, most problematic? *

- Introduction
- Body
- Conclusions
- Other:

15. The instructions you find in books in academic writing are always: *

- Very clear
- Clear
- Vague
- Unclear
- Incomprehensible

16. Do the students understand the given task? *

17. Which of the following teaching writing techniques do you use in order to develop the students' academic writing skills? *

- Giving various kinds of set structures to help them improve their writing
- Giving clear indications on how to write the text
- Examining samples of good writing in the classroom
- Offering more explanations online
- Making writing more interactive with the help of internet
- Other:

18. Please indicate how you motivate your students to write for academic purposes. *

19. In your opinion, are your students motivated writers? *

20. How often do you use internet for your classes? *

- Several times a day
- Daily
- Once in a week
- Once in a month
- Never

21. Say if you agree with the following statement: The development of academic writing skills should include the use of technology both inside and outside the classroom. *

Strongly agree Partially agree Undecided Rather disagree Strongly disagree

22. Say if you agree with the following statement: Technology can help improve the students' writing skills. *

Strongly agree Partially agree Undecided Rather disagree Strongly disagree

23. Please explain why you think so. *

24. Say if you agree with the following statement: Posting one's writing online makes the process of writing more interactive. *

Strongly agree Partially agree Undecided Rather disagree Strongly disagree

25. Say if you agree with the following statement: Posting one's writing online makes the writer more responsible as to the form and contents of his/her writing *

Strongly agree Partially agree Undecided Rather disagree Strongly disagree

26. Say if you agree with the following statement: Posting one's writing online makes the writer consider more the reader's expectations. *

Strongly agree Partially agree Undecided Rather disagree Strongly disagree

27. Do you keep a blog? *

- Yes
- No
- I have no idea what this is

28. If the answer to the above question is yes, specify why.

[Empty form field]

Submit

Never submit passwords through Google Forms.

Powered by
 **Google Forms**

This content is neither created nor endorsed by Google.
[Report Abuse](#) - [Terms of Service](#) - [Additional Terms](#)

☐

Connecting Lovers of English

Home
About Me
Creative Writing (c)
Dinosaurs
English Literature
Food for Thought
Grammar SOS
Individual Reading

Language Education
Phony English Phonetics :)
Questionnaires
The Anglophile
The Writing Lab

Frica

Posted on [November 14, 2015](#)

orbiți, surzi și mutilați,
încercându-se în marea indiferenței,
oamenilor le e frică de oameni...

Posted in [In the News](#) | [Leave a comment](#) | [Edit](#)

Reasoning :)

Posted on [March 29, 2015](#)

There are things that get to me. Things seemingly unrelated to me, because they do not involve me or any of the people I love and care about directly. Yet, they make me extremely sad. I've recently noticed that, as a rule, such things involve my inability to understand the reasons that lie behind certain actions, words, unspoken silences. So, instead of ignoring what should be ignored I start spending a lot of energy trying to understand the whats and whys of I don't know what. And, as a rule, I end up again and again angry with myself for persisting in wasting my time in vain. But maybe instead of being angry, I should accept this stubbornness of mine, as, after all, I should be stubborn like this for a reason. Consequently, as I can't understand its reason why shall I fret about other reasons when everything happens for a reason. Thus, it becomes useless to reason with myself when there's no reason at all in doing it as what happens for a reason does not involve my reason, but somebody else's reason. I'm not even mentioning the cases when I can't understand MY reason, as I see absolutely no reason in reasoning like this. I think it's reasonable enough for a lazy Sunday afternoon 😊

Posted in [From Vanica with Love :\)](#) | [Leave a comment](#) | [Edit](#)

6. imperatives

Posted on [March 25, 2015](#)

Go!
Shut the damn door!
Stop!
Drop the key on the floor!
Leave!
Lie to me... no more!
Wait!
Give back my faith!
Escape!

Assignments

Features of academic writing

- Assignment 1
- Assignment 10
- Assignment 11
- Assignment 12
- Assignment 2
- Assignment 3
- Assignment 4
- Assignment 5
- Assignment 6
- Assignment 7
- Assignment 8
- Assignment 9

- Student 21
- Student 22
- Student 23
- Student 24
- Student 25
- Student 26
- Student 27
- Student 28
- Student 29
- Student 3
- Student 30
- Student 31
- Student 4
- Student 5
- Student 6
- Student 7
- Student 8
- Student 9
- The whispering reims of Rome
- Thought-provoking questions


April 2016

M	T	W	T	F	S	S
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	

« Nov


It looks like your Facebook URL is incorrectly configured. Please check it

Appendix 5: The Writing Lab Page on Tb



Falling in English with You :)

Connecting Lovers of English



Home About Me Creative Writing (c) Dinosaurs English Literature Food for Thought Grammar SOS Individual Reading
Language Education Phony English Phonetics :) Questionnaires The Anglophile **The Writing Lab**

The Writing Lab

To write or not to write!

This the question that has been haunting me for a while. It is a frustrating question I would say. It often happens that I have so many things to say, but somehow I become numb if front of the blank sheet of paper.

Probably this is exactly how you feel when you are assigned to write something for your class. Maybe it is high time you reconsidered your attitude towards writing? Why not change it from a MUST into a pleasurable activity?

I can anticipate your question: 'How???'

Don't you think that technology might help? Let's try keeping blogs to enhance academic writing skills. We could create a small community where your drafts will be shared and your fellows will be able to give you some feedback. It is a good way to improve the quality of your writing. It is also an opportunity to enhance your critical thinking.

Share this:

Twitter Facebook

[Edit](#)

Leave a Reply

Enter your comment here...

Assignments

- Assignment 1
- Assignment 10
- Assignment 11
- Assignment 12
- Assignment 2
- Assignment 3
- Assignment 4
- Assignment 5
- Assignment 6
- Assignment 7
- Assignment 8
- Assignment 9
- Student 21
- Student 22
- Student 23
- Student 24
- Student 25
- Student 26
- Student 27
- Student 28
- Student 29
- Student 3
- Student 30
- Student 31
- Student 4
- Student 5
- Student 6
- Student 7
- Student 8
- Student 9
- The whispering ruins of Rome
- Thought-provoking questions

April 2016

M	T	W	T	F	S	S
					1	2 3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	

« Nov

It looks like your Facebook URL is incorrectly configured. Please check it in your widget settings.

☐ 🌐

Falling in English with You :)

Connecting Lovers of English

Home About Me Creative Writing (c) Dinosaurs English Literature Food for Thought Grammar SOS Individual Reading

Language Education Phony English Phonetics :) Questionnaires The Anglophile The Writing Lab

Assignments Assignment 1

Features of academic writing Assignment 10

Paragraph writing Assignment 11

Assignment 12

Assignment 2

Assignment 3

Assignment 4

Assignment 5

Assignment 6

Assignment 7

Assignment 8

Assignment 9

- Student 21
- Student 22
- Student 23
- Student 24
- Student 25
- Student 26
- Student 27
- Student 28
- Student 29
- Student 3
- Student 30
- Student 31
- Student 4
- Student 5
- Student 6
- Student 7
- Student 8
- Student 9
- The whispering rules of Rome
- Thought-provoking questions

April 2016

M	T	W	T	F	S	S
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	

« Nov

It looks like your Facebook URL is incorrectly configured. Please check it

Assignments

This is the page where the writing tasks will be displayed. In order to facilitate communication among yourselves you'll find below the blog roll consisting of a list of all the students' blogs who showed their interest in this experiment. So commenting your fellow's work is just a click away 😊

The blog roll:

<https://sites.google.com/site/inspiredwritinglab/>

Share this:

[Edit](#)

Leave a Reply

Enter your comment here...

Appendix 7: Features of academic writing Page on Tb

Falling in English with You :)

Connecting Lovers of English

Features of academic writing



□ 1 of 25 □

Features of Academic Writing

SCHEMATIC DIAGRAM



□ 1 of 6 □

Sample

Viorela Condrat

Features of Academic Writing

Being intended for a particular readership, the academic text follows the rules, norms, and conventions of the academic genre so that it is perceived as such. Thus, the writer manipulates with specific patterns that are characteristic of academic writing in order to persuade the reader. Ideally, the writer should be clear, concise, factual, and provide appropriately referenced ideas that are logically connected within paragraphs.

One feature of academic writing is the use of formal vocabulary which helps to render the writer's claims more authoritative and substantial. At the same time, the formal words will make the language clearer to the reader. They will remove the doubt as to what the writer intends to communicate. It is, therefore, important for the writer to select the words carefully.

Appendix 8: Weekly Assignments and Objectives

Period	Type of activity	Genre: rhetorical purpose	Possible aims
Week 1	Starting a blog	-	Given the instruction of how to create a blog, the student will be able to create and manage their own blog
Week 2	Paragraph writing	Personal and reflective writing	Given samples of coherent paragraphs, the student will be able to understand paragraph development in academic contexts and construct their first draft of a 150-word paragraph.
Week 3			Given the feedback to their post, the student will be able to accept or reject the offered suggestions and then write the final version of the 150-word paragraph in a cohesive and coherent way.
Week 4	Essay writing	Descriptive writing	Given the schematic diagram of Features of Academic Writing, the student will be able to write the first draft of 500-word essay stating the major characteristics of academic writing.
Week 5			Given the feedback to their post, the student will be able to accept or reject the offered suggestions and then write the final version of the 500-word descriptive essay in a cohesive and coherent way.
Week 6	Essay writing	Descriptive writing	Given their recent internship and their shared impressions about it, the students will be able to write the first draft of a 500-word descriptive essay stating the benefits and challenges of students' internship in Moldovan schools.
Week 7			Given the feedback to their post, the student will be able to accept or reject the offered suggestions and then write the final version of the 500-word descriptive essay in a cohesive and coherent way.
Week 8	Analysis	Analytical writing	Given two samples of analysis, the student will be able: (1) to deconstruct them identifying the main features of this type of writing; (2) to determine the quality of the analyses.
Week 9			Given the short story '...' the student will be able to write the first draft of the analysis following the characteristics of this type of writing.
Week 10			Given the feedback to their post, the student will be able to accept or reject the offered

			suggestions and then write the final version of the analysis in a cohesive and coherent way.
Week 11	Essay writing	Argumentative writing	Given the quotation by Lytton Strachey, the student will be able to write the first draft of the argumentative essay within 500 words.
Week 12			Given the feedback to their post, the student will be able to accept or reject the offered suggestions and then write the final version of the 500-word essay in a cohesive and coherent way.

Appendix 9: Semi-structured pre-treatment interview

1. What types of writing are you supposed to produce for academic purposes?
2. Do you like writing for academic purposes? Why? / Why not?
3. What motivates you to write?
4. I would like you to share your experience of writing your course paper?
 - a. Was it difficult? Why? / Why not?
 - b. Did you know what to write?
 - c. What sources did you consult before and during writing your paper?
5. How would you assess yourself? Do you think you are a proficient writer?
6. What needs improvement most?
7. Do you agree with your teacher's methods of teaching writing for academic purposes?
8. On whose opinion do you rely most when it comes to assessing writing?
9. Do you give your peers to read your writing before submitting it to your teacher?

Appendix 10: Structured post-treatment survey

1. Has blogging helped to improve your academic writing skills?

- If yes, what exactly was most helpful?
- If no, what, in your opinion, hampered it?

2. How did you approach writing? What were you doing before, while, and after posting the first draft?

3. What was most difficult for you while writing the first draft?

4. What were you doing before, while, and after writing the final version?

5. What was most difficult for you while writing the final version?

6. What were you paying attention to while reading your peers' blogs?

7. How would you evaluate your peers' comments on your writing? Did you agree with all of them?

8. Whose comments did you trust most? Why?

9. In your opinion, did blogging make academic writing more interactive? How did you feel about making it public?

10. In general, do you think you have become more confident while writing for academic purposes?

Appendix 11: Field Note Form

	DESCRIPTIVE NOTES	REFLECTIVE NOTES
ST1		
ST2		
ST3		
ST4		
ST5		
ST6		
SUMMARY		

The back part of the field note

What was the students' behaviour during the Skype meetings?	
What questions did the students have?	
How did they react to the peers' comments?	
What are the next steps to be taken?	
Is blogging for academic purposes helping students to improve their writing skills?	
What do they learn?	
Notes	

Appendix 12: Codes

1 content	2 organisation	3 style
1.1 understanding the question	2.1 presence of topic sentence (TS)	3.1 grammatical norms followed
1.2 misunderstanding the question	2.2 no TS	3.2 grammatical norms flouted
1.3 development of primary ideas	2.3 transition	3.3 objective tone
1.4 no development of primary ideas	2.4 no transition	3.4 subjective tone
1.5 use of evidence	2.5 introduction	3.5 redundancy
1.6 no use of evidence	2.6 no introduction	3.6 clarity
	2.7 sequence and development of paragraphs	3.7 vagueness (generic)
	2.8 no sequence and development of paragraphs	3.8 pompous language (clichéd)
	2.9 conclusion	3.9 words that do not collocate

	2.10 no conclusion	3.10 inappropriateness
		3.11 appropriateness
		3.12 contractions
		3.13 informal words
		3.14 questioning the reader
		3.15 exclamation marks

Appendix 13: Rubric to Measure Students' Performance

Student's Name _____

Draft _____

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
<i>Organizational Skills</i>	The organizational strategy demonstrates evidence of planning and a logical progression of ideas. There is an effective introduction and conclusion and thoughtful transitions that convey a sense of unity.	The organizational strategy is apparent with a progression of ideas that allows the reader to move through the text without confusion. The introduction, conclusion, and transitions often work well.	There is an attempt at organization, but there may be digressions, repetition, or contradictory information. The introduction and conclusion are weak or may be missing; there is an occasional progression of ideas.	Lack of an identifiable organizational strategy (random order). Lack of an introduction, conclusion, and/or progression of ideas makes it difficult for the reader to move through the text (confusing).
<i>Style</i>	Sentences are clear and effective. Presence of rich vocabulary. Tone, word choice are appropriate for the academic context. All sentences are well constructed and have varied structure and length. The author makes no errors in grammar, mechanics, and/or spelling.	Word choice, sentence syntax, and tone are generally successful at communicating the writer's intention and are suited for the academic context. Most sentences are well constructed and have varied structure and length. The author makes a few errors in grammar, mechanics, and/or spelling, but they do not interfere with understanding.	The writing is understandable but the word choice, syntax and tone are rather inappropriate for the academic context. It is difficult for the reader to clearly determine the writer's intention. Most sentences are well constructed, but they have a similar structure and/or length. The author makes several errors in grammar, mechanics, and/or spelling	Failure to communicate the intention because of erroneous word choice, syntax and adopted tone. Sentences sound awkward, are distractingly repetitive, or are difficult to understand. The author makes numerous errors in grammar, mechanics, and/or spelling that interfere with understanding.

<p><i>Content</i></p>	<p>Writing is confident and clearly focused. Reasoning is entirely appropriate to the audience and purpose. Relevant evidence enrich writing and is fully developed. It holds the reader's attention.</p>	<p>Reasoning is adequate to support arguments. The assignment is complete. Writing is purposeful and focused. It contains relevant evidence. The arguments are developed.</p>	<p>that interfere with understanding. Arguments are developed inadequately or superficially, or significant portions of content are inaccurate in reasoning. Knowledge is communicated somewhat unclearly. Inaccurate information is presented.</p>	<p>The assignment is incomplete or the paper shows little or no attempt to support arguments. Writing does not clearly communicate knowledge. The reader is left with questions.</p>
-----------------------	---	---	---	--

Appendix 14: Rubric to Measure Students' Attitude

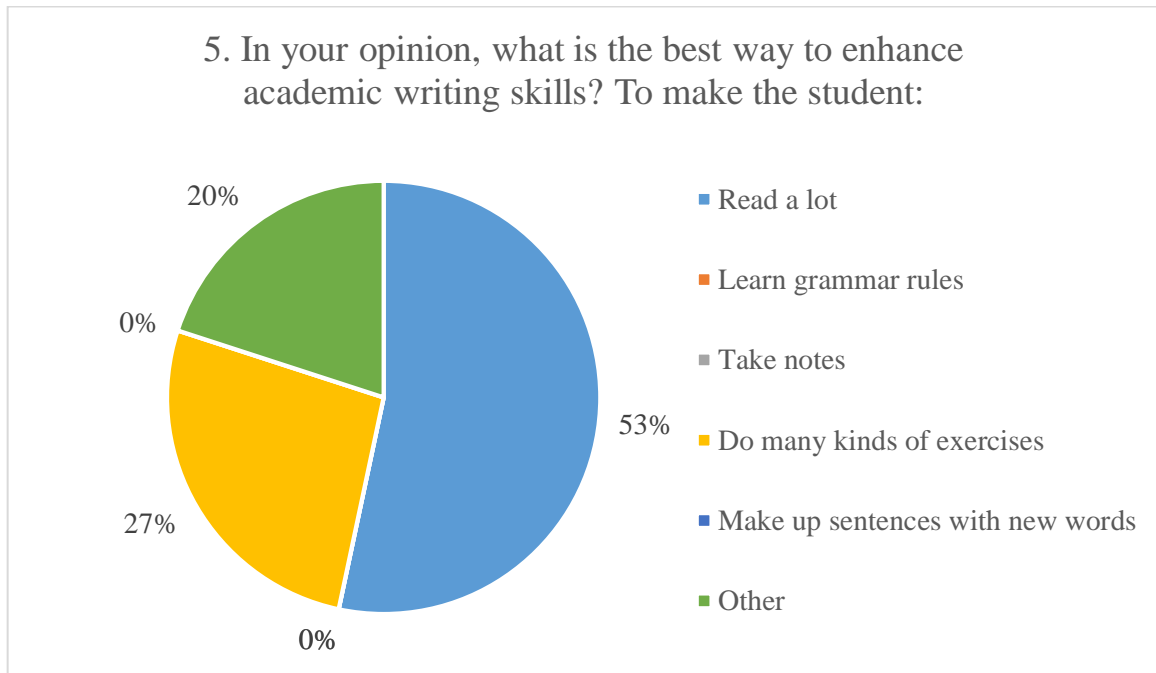
Student's Name _____
 Draft _____

	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
<i>Attitude</i>	Meets the deadline, active participant, makes more posts than required, fully motivated, always shows interest	Meets the deadline, posts regularly, motivated, does exclusively what has been assigned.	Finds hard to meet the deadline, partially motivated, posts sporadically.	Does not meet the deadline, unmotivated, lack of interest

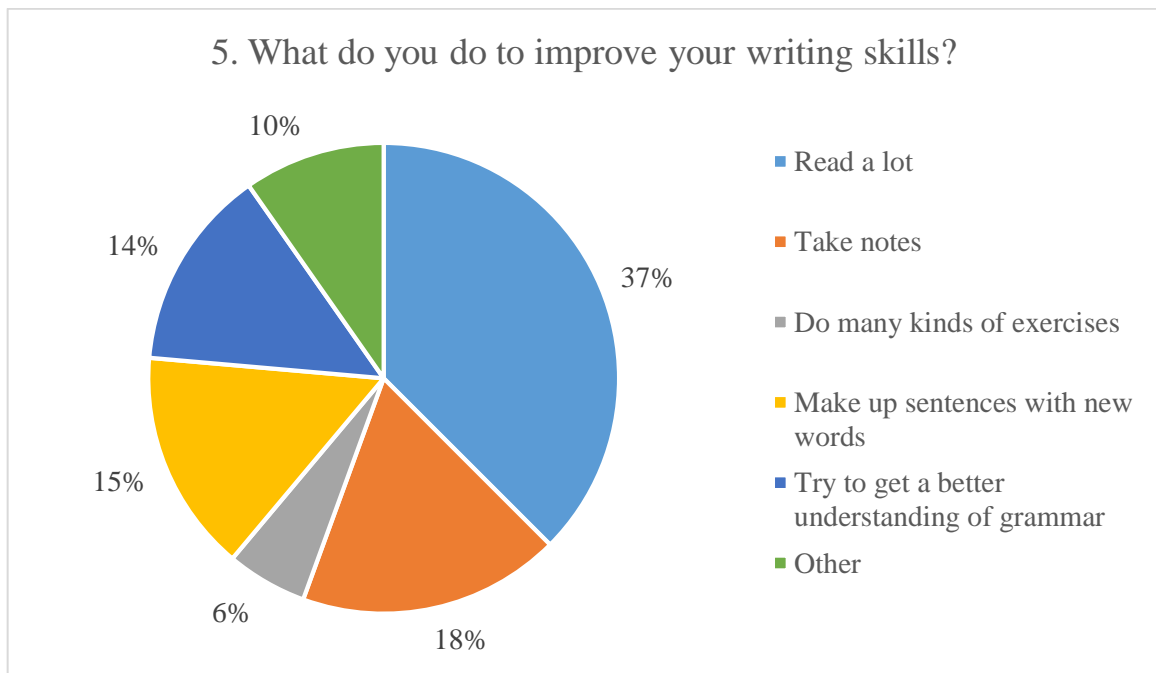
Appendix 15:

What the best way to enhance academic writing skills is?

Teachers' responses

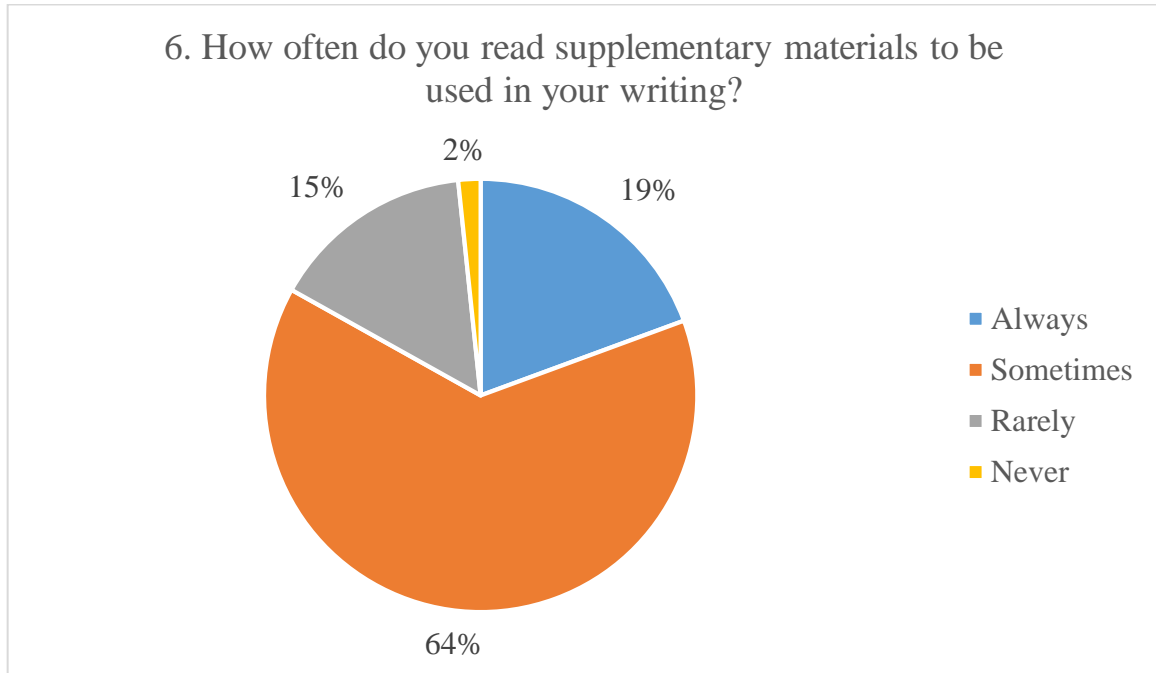


Students' responses

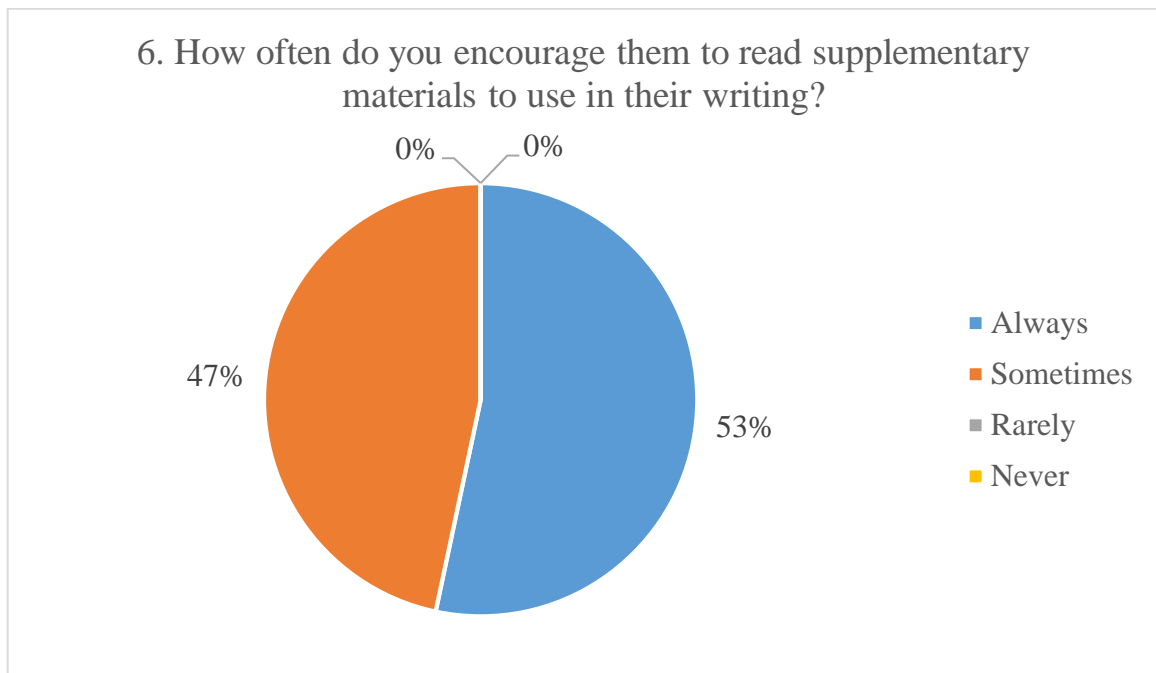


Appendix 16:
On reading supplementary materials to be used in writing

Students' responses



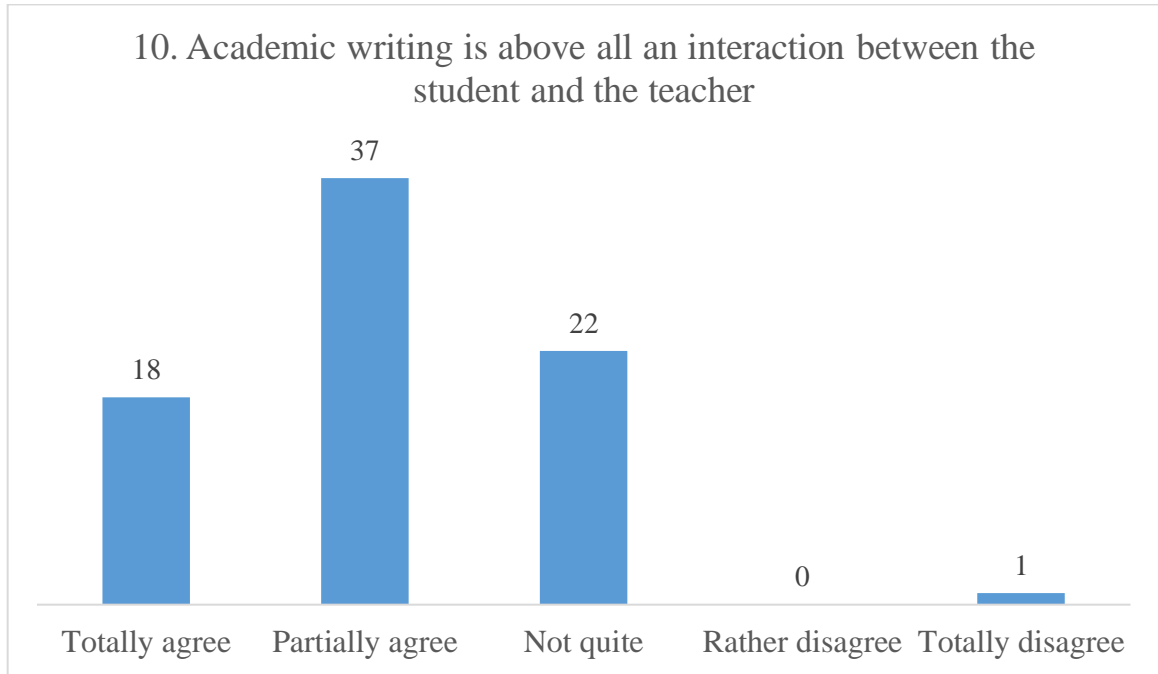
Teachers' responses



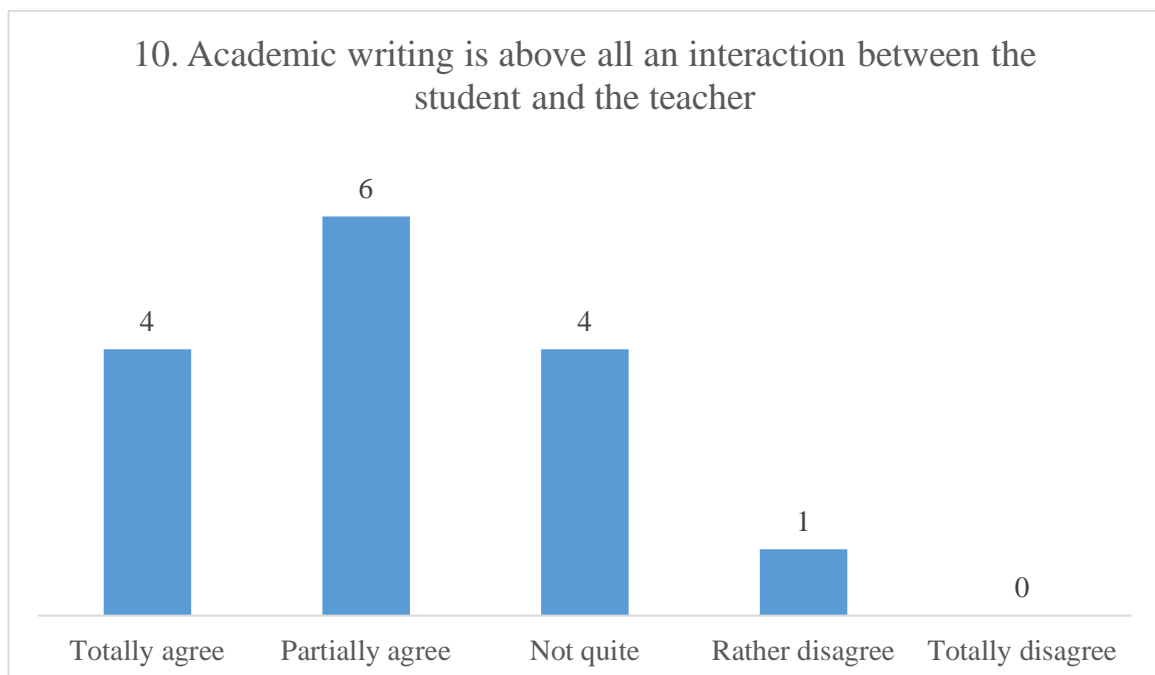
Appendix 17:

The students' and teachers' attitude concerning academic writing as an act of communication within their small discourse community

Students' responses



Teachers' responses



Studente: Viorica Condrat matricola: 956102

Dottorato: Scienze del Linguaggio

Ciclo: 29

Titolo della tesi: Parallel blogging as an interactive pedagogical tool to enhance writing skills in EAP contexts

Abstract:

The primary purpose of this study is to present the results of the action research conducted at Alecu Russo Balti State University of Moldova. It aims to understand the students' perception of academic writing in general, on the one hand, and consider whether blogging can be used as a tool to enhance academic writing skills, on the other. Consequently, there are two main foci of interest. The first focuses on outlining whether the students realize the specificity and use of written communication in academic settings. The second examines the results of the experiment in order to show whether blogging can help students to develop their academic writing skills.

The analysis of the findings has shown the students' overall positive attitude towards the use of blogs. Blogging seemed to have contributed to the students' development of academic writing skills as it offered the optimal context for the teacher/student scholarly communication, which helped to boost the students' confidence and motivation. It also enhanced peer interactions where students tried to scaffold each other's development of writing skills. Besides, the use of blogs helped to create a sense of affiliation to a concrete discourse community in students, thus making the process of academic writing more purposeful and pleasurable.

Questo studio si propone di delineare la percezione di scrittura accademica degli studenti e verificare le potenzialità di blogging come strumento che può contribuire allo sviluppo delle competenze della scrittura accademica. Lo studio è basato sui risultati della ricerca – azione condotta all'Università "Alecu Russo" di Balti, Repubblica Moldova.

I risultati riportano un atteggiamento positivo degli studenti verso l'utilizzo dei blog che li aiuta ad acquistare una maggior consapevolezza sull'importanza della scrittura accademica per il loro sviluppo accademico. Il processo d'apprendimento diventa così più piacevole e dunque più efficace. Blogging offre inoltre il contesto ottimale per la comunicazione scientifica tra lo studente e il docente. Questo fatto aiuta ad incrementare la fiducia e la motivazione degli studenti. L'utilizzo dei blog contribuisce anche alla creazione di un senso di appartenenza ad una comunità discorsiva degli studenti, rendendo così il processo di scrittura accademica più significativo e propositivo.

Firma dello studente

