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## A Blended Approach For Teaching EFL Writing At University Level: Classroom Applications

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### Abstract

This paper attempts to suggest ways of improving EFL writing instruction at tertiary level by exploring the interrelationship between writing, metacognition and blended learning. In accordance with the research findings of a former doctoral study (Arar, 2015), this article describes some applications of a suggested writing instructional model that combines principles from three approaches: Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach, Computer Assisted Writing, and Writing Across the Curriculum. The aim of the proposed writing framework is to develop students' metacognitive awareness during the writing process, as well as meet learners' writing and learning needs via a more authentic and contextual writing instruction that promotes language, writing, technology use, and autonomy. The overall objective of this paper is to illustrate classroom applications of this instructional model that strives for improving students' achievement in writing and in EFL learning.

**Keywords :** EFL writing in higher education, metacognition, blended learning, classroom practices

### ملخص

يقترح هذا المقال طرقا لتطوير منهاج لتدريس التعبير الكتابي باللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية في الطور الجامعي من خلال استكشاف العلاقة المتبادلة بين الكتابة، الوعي المعرفي والتعلم المزيج. واستنادا إلى لنتائج البحث الإيجابية لرسالة الدكتوراه (عرعار، 2015)، تصف هذه المقالة بعض التطبيقات لنموذج تعليمي للتعبير الكتابي يدمج مبادئ من ثلاثة مقاربات: المنهج المعرفي الأكاديمي لتعلم اللغة، الكتابة عبر المنهج الدراسي والكتابة بمساعدة الحاسوب. الهدف من نموذج الكتابة المقترح هو تطوير الوعي المعرفي لدى الطلاب أثناء عملية الكتابة، فضلا عن تلبية احتياجات المتعلمين في التعبير الكتابي وفي تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية من خلال طريقة لتعليم الكتابة ميدانية وأكثر واقعية تدعم كلا من اللغة، الكتابة، استخدام التكنولوجيا والاستقلالية. الهدف العام من هذا العمل هو توضيح التطبيقات الصفية لهذا النموذج التعليمي الذي يسعى لتحسين تحصيل الطلاب في الكتابة وفي تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية عموما.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** الكتابة باللغة الإنجليزية، الوعي المعرفي، التعلم المزيج، تطبيقات صفية في الطور الجامعي

## **1. Introduction**

EFL Writing at tertiary level is an important skill for learning and testing, and learning to write effectively is a prominent key to success at university level and beyond. Because of university study requirements that demand from student higher order mental skills, and because of the technological expansion worldwide, it is necessary to rethink writing instruction in a way to promote thinking, learning and writing strategies, within a blended learning perspective. This paper briefly reports the results of a doctoral study (Arar, 2015) involving an academic teaching framework that promotes both university level EFL writing and language learning, and which leads to the development of students' metacognitive awareness in writing. This teaching model combines insights from three approaches namely; Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach (CALLA) to foster learners' cognitive and metacognitive strategies, Computer-Assisted Writing (CAW) to initiate students to technology- enhanced learning, and Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) to develop their linguistic and rhetorical competencies while meaningfully expressing their ideas in writing. The overall objective is to scaffold EFL students in metacognitive awareness to attain better writing and EFL learning achievement, and to train them in self-regulation and autonomy in order to adhere to digital communication. This article accordingly strives to illustrate how the proposed instructional model can be practically exploited in the writing classroom to achieve the afore-mentioned educational objectives. The basic steps of this paper consist in acknowledging EFL students' needs, and explaining strategy-based writing instruction within a blended learning perspective.

## **2. Considering Students' Difficulties and Needs**

It was observed in the research study that the lack of training in the LMD system teaching and evaluation principles drives teachers to adopt traditional lecture-based teaching and language accuracy-oriented assessment methods leading to contradictions between the syllabus content and evaluation practices. Large groups also prevent teachers from assigning regular homework for students, and from considering learners' different abilities and learning styles, or even from providing them with individual feedback. Poor infrastructure and the absence of an Internet laboratory for students equally prevent the integration of ICTs in their learning and research practices. Besides, the writing lesson and examination seem to be language-based and accuracy-oriented since teachers focus more on linguistic accuracy (grammar, vocabulary and mechanics) than on composing skills. University level instruction is not based on students' actual abilities and prospective needs, and does not consider learners' cognitive and meta-cognitive competences, as students are neither trained into self-reliance, goal setting, nor autonomy. In short, failure in writing relates to failure in EFL teaching/learning in general. All these reasons triggered the researcher's interest in thinking about a teaching approach to teach writing and improve EFL learning.

Consequently, the attempt was to explore the interrelationship between writing, learning and thinking, and to suggest an academic framework that would promote learning and writing strategies alike by developing meta-cognitive awareness in the writing process, through a blended learning instructional model that combined principles from the Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach and Computer-Assisted Instruction. According to the research findings, the informants progressed considerably in terms of writing awareness and learning awareness, which led to upgrading their academic achievement in writing and in EFL learning. The instruction also contributed in reshaping students' beliefs about efficient writing and successful learning. Improvement was noticed over time, mainly through tasks such as self- and peer-editing, collaborative writing, unstructured interviews and conferencing, and later with the introduction of the Moodle. Nevertheless, the consideration of the different analytical procedures highlighted students' writing and learning needs, essentially at linguistic

and composing levels. As a result, the suggested model required another approach (Writing Across the Curriculum) in order to meet those needs and arrive at a more effective writing and EFL university instruction. The blended approach model to teaching writing proved effective in developing students' metacognitive awareness, and improving in both writing and EFL learning. It is then highly recommended, particularly within the LMD context where reflective and self-regulated learning as well as learner autonomy represent major objectives.

Before providing theoretical and practical arguments for a satisfactory writing instructional model, it is imperative to identify EFL learners' writing and learning needs and difficulties. The students displayed weak metacognitive knowledge base, featuring at different levels:

- *Background knowledge*, manifested in their deficiencies in language mastery; namely grammar and vocabulary, spelling and mechanics. In addition to ignoring the nature of writing tasks and what is expected from them in terms of proficiency and production.
- *Procedural knowledge*, apparent in their lack of rhetorical strategies and in appropriate consideration of genre, purpose and audience.
- *Strategic knowledge*; that is not knowing when and how to select appropriate strategies and putting them into practice.

Consequently, these students need to

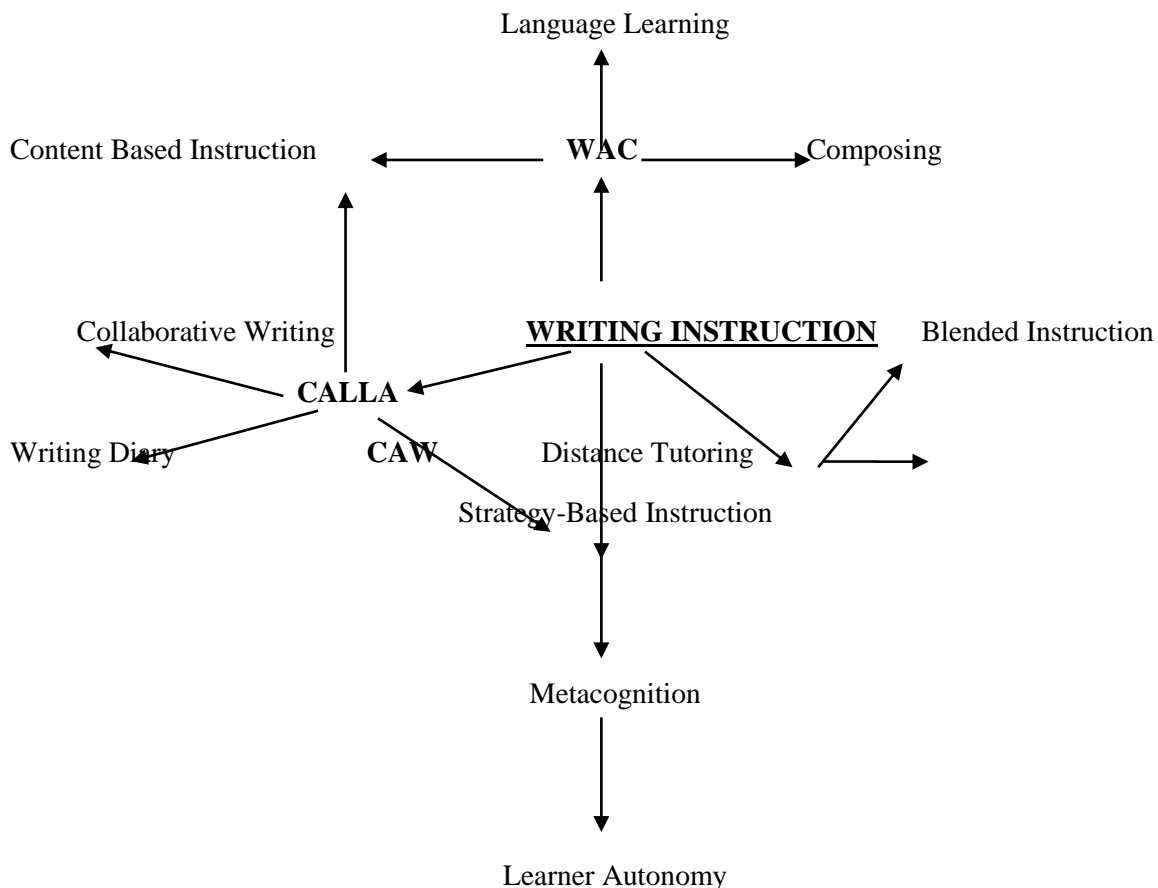
- be actively involved in the writing lessons and aware of the objectives,
- perceive the communicative nature of writing skill, and understand the relatedness between writing and other subjects.
- be provided with more practice in writing strategies, mainly in revising strategies,
- be guided to overcome their linguistic, rhetorical and learning-related weaknesses,
- be active and open to cope with writing and learning challenges individually, collaboratively, or with the training and tutoring of teachers,
- be trained in self-reflection and self-monitoring so as to achieve self-reliance and self-regulated learning and ultimately autonomy;
- be introduced to technology-friendly writing through explicit instruction, within a safe learning atmosphere and relaxed writing environment (Urquhart and McIver, 2005 and Wajnryb, 1992) where they can communicate with their teacher(s) and with each other through pair and group work,

In order for these students to become proactive competent writers, their needs should be considered in accordance with academic goals, university objectives, and professional expectations. They ought to be initiated to ways of developing writing and learning strategies at university level through an instruction that would help them improve linguistically, rhetorically and metacognitively. The next section describes the blended learning approach to teach writing at university level, with particular focus on classroom applications.

### **3. A Blended Approach to Writing Instruction: Theoretical Framework**

The writing instructional model adopts insights from a cognitive-social theory-based approach known as CALLA, in order to institute a strategy-based instruction that promotes metacognition (Flavell, 1979; Chamot et al, 1999). In addition, this model requires integrating the use of ICTs with writing instruction through CAW (Corbel and Gruba, 2004; Mevarech et al, 2007; Sullivan and Pratt, 1999), to help students improve their proficiency, and to solve the problem of large classes and insufficient time devoted to writing, by enriching writing instruction within and beyond classroom settings. Moreover, language studies are made an integral part of the writing instruction by advocating Writing Across the Curriculum approach (WAC), in which writing is considered as a learning tool to reinforce language mastery,

composing practice, thinking, and learning (Smoke, 2001). In this context, Content-Based Instruction ensures relevance and richness of ideas as well as meaningfulness of topics by integrating writing in the different courses of the EFL syllabus. The theoretical framework that resulted from the study combines different learning and writing approaches, covering three areas: writing, thinking and learning, as shown in the diagram below:



**A Blended Approach Model to University Writing Instruction (Arar, 2015: 251)**

The suggested teaching model can pave the way to solutions that aim at remedying students’ linguistic, rhetorical, and learning weaknesses. It is then necessary to explore the implementation of this instructional framework through appropriate classroom practices.

**4. Implications for the Classroom**

**4.1. Teaching Methodology**

The different stages of this approach aim to scaffold students and develop their mastery of writing strategies through explicit instruction based on metacognitive strategies as planning, monitoring, and evaluating. Writing strategies and metacognitive awareness are explicitly taught. Students need training in setting learning and writing objectives (strategic knowledge), developing awareness of the writing task (task knowledge), and adopting the necessary strategies to function alone or with the help of peers and teacher (affective strategies). The different steps of a strategic writing lesson are inspired from CALLA principles, in which the task-based instructional design is characterized by the incorporation of content, language, and learning strategies to attain learner autonomy. The writing lesson goes through four main steps with specific teacher and learner roles:

**Stage One: Planning**

Teacher	Students
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- specifies objectives of the lesson</li> <li>- (possibly) asks learners to make their own research about the type of paragraph to be studied</li> <li>- activates background knowledge</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- attend and participate</li> <li>- ask themselves such questions as                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>What is the nature of the task?</i></li> <li><i>What is my goal?</i></li> <li><i>What kind of information and strategies do I need?</i></li> <li><i>How much time and resources will I need?</i></li> </ul> </li> </ul>

**Stage Two: Sequencing**

Teacher	Students
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- explains/models how to write a piece of writing</li> <li>- introduces such activities as :                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Reading a model paragraph illustrating the writing genre under focus, or deriving features of that genre and deducing theoretical basis/rules</i></li> </ul> </li> <li>- teaches explicitly writing strategies (prewriting, outlining, drafting...)</li> <li>- provides practice in class of the studied strategies into individual, pair or group work (to raise awareness of reader, Brookes and Grundy, 1998)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- practise guided participation</li> <li>- contribute with their research results and arrive with teacher's guidance to a theoretical summary</li> <li>- apply strategies with guidance</li> <li>- write a list of words/sentences to find something to write about)</li> <li>- try different prewriting techniques</li> <li>- write different drafts of the topic</li> </ul>

**Stage Three: Monitoring**

Teacher	Students
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- responds to learners' first draft by putting a number of remarks and comments (gives</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- are incited to correct their own work by interpreting feedback symbols</li> </ul>

<p>feedback)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- provides overt and external guidance to students while they are composing,</li> <li>- sometimes resorts to one-to-one instruction to help learners gain confidence in their learning and writing strategies (through unstructured interviews and conferences)</li> <li>- watches them compose and provides assistance as needed.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- are trained to self-questioning to monitor their own progress, using questions as</li> </ul> <p><i>Do I have a clear understanding of what I am doing?</i></p> <p><i>Does the task make sense?</i></p> <p><i>Am I reaching my goals?</i></p> <p><i>Do I need to make changes?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- compose <i>silently</i> using the writing and regulatory strategies learned in the previous steps</li> </ul>
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**Stage Four: Assessing and Expanding**

<b>Teacher</b>	<b>Students</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- assesses strategies</li> <li>- supports transfer of strategies to new tasks</li> <li>- provides more practice through homework, class work, or timed/ untimed writing</li> <li>- evaluates students' written products via written comments or grades (formative and summative assessment)</li> <li>- encourages independent use of writing and regulatory strategies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- are encouraged to self- and peer-editing /scoring, using self- and peer-evaluation sheets</li> <li>- self-assess own strategies</li> </ul> <p><i>Have I reached my goal?</i></p> <p><i>What worked?</i></p> <p><i>What didn't work?</i></p> <p><i>Would I do things differently next time?</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- transfer strategies to new tasks</li> <li>- become self-directed, and use the internalized strategies to compose and self-regulate their writing</li> <li>- use strategies independently</li> </ul>

Within this metacognitive instruction, the teacher clearly plays a key role in assisting learners in the choice, application and evaluation of writing and learning strategies. The writing teacher should

- begin by building 'subject-matter awareness'; in other words, to draw students' attention to the importance of writing as a language learning skill and as a key to success in and all the other subjects.
- guide students to set learning and writing objectives
- introduce and explain the metacognitive strategies in parallel with the cognitive ones
- model the use and evaluation of these strategies,
- monitor the whole process via practical techniques.

- help students identify their own learning styles and ‘successful’ strategies.
- make use of conferencing and informal interviews, either with individual students or with the whole class
- scaffold students to gain more responsibility by cultivating their strategic knowledge through student-teacher talk during a writing instruction that combines relevant themes, focus on language, writing process modeling, and regular feedback from peers and tutors (Cotteral and Cohen, 2003).

Ultimately, students develop their thinking and writing skills, evaluate their own strategies, internalize the successful ones, and become competent users of these strategies either independently or collaboratively.

#### **4.2. Recommendations for the Development of Writing Skills**

Learning to write can be teacher-scaffolded, but it is better when it is self-monitored and peer-promoted. Collaborative writing can be promoted through ‘Writing Workshop’ and ‘Small-Group Writing Instruction’ (Grenville, 2001) in order to

- share ideas and develop language by expanding word banks
- empower affective strategies and social strategies through encouraging oneself, asking questions, asking for clarification/correction, and cooperating with others,
- develop cultural understanding and gain awareness of others’ thoughts and feelings (Oxford, 1990).
- motivate students mainly in process and genre-based approaches( Harmer 2001: 260), since it facilitates generating ideas as well as reviewing and evaluation, as many learners are involved.

Collaborative writing were encouraged in the experimental study by the use of peer-editing and peer-scoring sheets (Appendices A, and B), and through pair- and group-work assignments. These editing and scoring sheets proved to be very efficient in building students’ metacognitive awareness in writing, as they guided them reflect on their own and their peers’ writings. In fact, reflective writing (and learning) can be monitored by holding a writing diary in which students consider their writing and learning experiences. In these learning diaries, students can

- write individually, under the teacher’s guidance or share with peers
- keep note of their written products and their progress.
- gather their written products in portfolios (Hirvela and Sweetland, 2005; Song and August, 2002).
- write regularly and note down where they confronted difficulties or problems in writing, and how they managed to solve these problems, increasing as such metacognitive understanding of their own thinking processes (Chamot *et al.*, 1999).

Writing journals can serve many purposes: learners monitor their own progress according to their objectives, teachers analyse learners’ needs, and both teachers and learners keep in continuous contact. However, teachers should respond regularly to these diaries and negotiate with learners what to be assessed and how to remedy weaknesses and failures. Furthermore, readership or audience should be part of the writing syllabus in terms of instruction and evaluation, because the main goal of writing is to prepare students to communicate effectively in a variety of situations at the University, in their future employment, and in their roles as citizens. While Beaufort (2008) calls for writing intensively and for different audiences, Harris (1993: 23) believes writers need to know as much as possible about a target audience (in terms of formality or informality of the relationship between reader and writer, and the degree

of prior knowledge) to be able to communicate successfully. Students should be able to make informed choices about grammatical, lexical and semantic constructions to include in their written products. Then the teacher has to vary the writing activities in such a way as to expose learners to texts written for different types of readers, and have students compose for different audiences using different writing conventions.

#### **4.3. Reconsidering Writing Feedback and Assessment**

According to Hyland (2003), writing feedback practices include the teacher written comments combined with peer feedback, self-monitoring, teacher-student conference, and computer-mediated feedback. The teacher can also change correction and feedback focus every time (fluency, accuracy, coherence, unity...), as well as combine direct and indirect feedback with face-to-face conferencing (Hyland, 2003). Other illustrations of feedback procedures used by the researcher and which led to satisfactory results, include:

- peer group responses of various types,
- teacher demonstrations of revisions with specific student writings, in addition to
- analytic-guide questions and lists, or using specific rubrics (Appendices A & B). (These lists or rubrics should also have different focus each time they are used: grammar, vocabulary, mechanics, coherence, unity, sentence structure, and so on)
- students' self-assessment of their own writings and those of their peers, by using a scoring rubric (Appendix C) for remedying students' overreliance on teacher for correction/evaluation,
- avoiding over-correction of errors and keeping criticism to the minimum in order to encourage students to write confidently in a supportive learning environment.
- devising evaluation practices that take into consideration the process nature of writing, and to evaluate students' products at different steps of the writing process (brainstorming, drafting and revising). This is likely to resolve the disparity between process teaching and product testing (Hinkel, 2004), and
- providing students with individual online and offline feedback (Hyland and Hyland, 2006).

These different feedback modes are not mutually exclusive but rather complementary. The adequate use of varied feedback modes will contribute to the productive use of feedback in the writing class and facilitate students' writing improvement in a foreign language.

#### **4.4. Blended Learning Writing Instruction**

Blended learning refers to a combination of e-learning and conventional learning approaches. It constitutes a major part of the instructional model to teach writing at university level mainly because English as an international language is being used in technologically mediated contexts (Dudeny and Hockly, 2007). The computer-assisted learning platform enables students to learn at their own pace (*individualised learning*). This means to practise, ask for help, or extend knowledge only when needed and anonymously. It also encourages them to seek knowledge from sources other than the teacher and beyond the classroom setting. They also receive *immediate or delayed feedback* on their written products. Likewise, CAW promotes learner autonomy in that students can attend to their own weaknesses, find appropriate solutions from different sources and learn collaboratively. Computers also offer computer-assisted programmes for testing language skills, which may include *self-testing* activities where feedback is immediate, as well possibilities for *synchronous* and *asynchronous communication* (online or offline) (Mevarechet *al*, 2007).

Blended instruction can be adopted in the classroom by using *CDRoms*, *Power Point* and *Word Processors*. Word processing is useful in the areas of drafting and revision; it



equips student writers with opportunities to write at word level (fill-in-the-blank, multiple-choice, and true/false questions). Word processors also offer online assistance with *dictionaries, spell checkers, and grammar helps*, and they engage in activities that focus on the process of writing rather than on the final written products (while brainstorming, note taking, outlining and revising). As a result, students write longer papers, spend more time writing and revising, and show improved mechanics and word choice. Additionally, *distance education* contributes in establishing more communication opportunities between teachers and learners and between learners themselves. This could be in the form of *forums, blogs, and wikis*<sup>i</sup> (Miyazoe and Anderson, 2010). The use of ICTs has given way to '*electronic writing*' that contributes in developing students' writing proficiency outside the university setting. Possible ways of instituting distance writing include *communicating and sending writing assignments via e-mail, Computer conferencing and discussing, using Online-writing labs (OWLs)*<sup>ii</sup>, or *using a teaching/learning platform or Virtual Learning Environment (VLE)*, also known as *Moodle (Modular Object-Oriented Dynamic Learning Environment)*. A Moodle, part of the experimental study, is a web-based platform on which course content in the form of lesson summaries and activities can be stored, and downloaded by students. The teacher can monitor both learning and assessment of students in the writing skill. Adas and Bakir (2013: 25) suggest devoting part of the semester grade to blended or distance writing instruction in order to motivate students to participate in online activities. It is worth noting that distance tutoring may be considered as a solution to tutoring (tutorat du LMD) since it is difficult for teachers and students alike to meet regularly at university level.

Nevertheless, blended writing instruction may encounter certain difficulties such as the lack of necessary equipment in the form of computers, laboratories, and Internet connectivity; students' and or teachers' resistance to technology-based learning, and the lack of competence in technology use by either teachers or students. It follows that students and teachers have to be trained into word processing and Internet surfing (Hedge, 2000; Kern, 2000), and that teachers must create a need for ICTs to boost students' motivation.

#### **4.5. Writing Across the Curriculum: Meeting EFL Students' Linguistic and Composing Difficulties**

In addition to raising students' meta-cognitive awareness in writing and learning, and using blended instruction to promote technology-enhanced language learning, it is also significant to consider writing as both a means and an end of EFL instruction, in order to attain more successful academic results. The reported study revealed students' inability to link between the different subjects in the EFL syllabus. Consequently, it was necessary to think about ways of achieving meaningfulness and authenticity in teaching writing. This could be reached by adopting the principles of Writing Across the Curriculum approach (WAC), which advocates that writing instruction should go beyond the composing classroom to integrate all the subjects in the syllabus. By linking writing to other language skills or other content subjects, students are guided to overcome their linguistic weaknesses and reinforce the composing practice (Smoke, 2001), as writing tasks become more appealing. Pedagogically speaking, 'Content-Based Instruction' seems appropriate to achieve the goals of authenticity and meaningfulness, since it avoids isolating language from content (Grabe and Stoller, 1997) and calls for the integration of subjects. At university level, this integration presupposes teaching skills while using the corresponding programme of culture-based (content) subjects, such as those of civilization and literature. The writing teacher can go beyond general (and monotonous) topics (related to life in general), such as sports, health, family..., and draw content from literature and civilisation syllabi. This essentially means to make students understand more easily the structure of different rhetorical modes by dealing with topics they have already come across, as the next table illustrates (Arar, 2013: 271).

<b>Traditional writing topics</b>	<b>Suggested writing topics</b>
<p>1- Write <i>a comparison/contrast essay</i> in which you compare studying in high school and studying at university level.</p> <p>2- Write <i>a logical division essay</i> explaining the reasons of the increase of violence in society.</p> <p>2- Write <i>an argumentative essay</i> on freedom of the press.</p>	<p>1- Write <i>a comparison/contrast essay</i> in which you compare the political system in Great Britain with that of the USA.</p> <p>2- Write <i>a logical division essay</i> explaining the reasons of the economic decline that Britain witnessed by the end of the 1970s.</p> <p>3- Write <i>an argumentative essay</i> on the concept of heroism in Hamlet.</p>

Content-Based Instruction can build bridges between authenticity and meaningfulness, so EFL instruction has to be designed accordingly. Besides, teachers in charge of different subjects should meet regularly to adjust their teaching and testing practices. Equally important is to perceive writing as a learning tool, which promotes language and content at the same time.

#### a) Writing as Language Learning

It is essential to develop students' language competence in parallel with writing competence. Abbot *et al* (1981) posit that writing should be fully integrated with all the skills and not treated in isolation or neglected. They argue that it is imperative to build learners' discourse knowledge by including the teaching of rhetorical and discourse properties of academic writing at university level (Hinkel, 2004).

i) The interrelationship between *speaking and writing* can be exploited in the writing classroom by

- discussing students' writing and learning strategies,
- discussing a given topic as part of a pre-writing activity;
- modeling oral answers to questions about content before students' practice (Cook Hirai *et al*, 2010:108).
- chatting on the net as an effective way of 'speaking' slowly by exchanging lines of text. This is so because learners spend some time to type and thus think about the language and structures to use (Thornbury, 2005: 68).

Nevertheless, since speaking and writing make use of different grammatical, lexical and paralinguistic choices, and since learners tend to write the way they speak (Cook Hirai *et al*, 2010), the teacher should raise students' awareness of distinctions before engaging in writing assignments. Thornbury (2005: 21) sums up features of spoken grammar that distinguish it from written grammar as follows:

<b>Written grammar</b>	<b>Spoken grammar</b>
the sentence is the basic unit of construction	the clause is the basic unit of construction
clauses are often embedded (subordination)	clauses are usually added (co-ordination)
subject + verb + object construction	head + body + tail construction

reported speech favoured	direct speech favoured
precision favoured	vagueness tolerated
little ellipsis	a lot of ellipsis
no question tags	many question tags
no performance effects	performance effects, including: hesitation, repeats , false starts, incompleteness, syntactic blends

**ii)** Moreover, *reading and writing* are complementary skills since

- the two skills have a role in promoting language learning since both afford time to process meaning, and both involve all aspects of language structure and use: phonology, graphology, vocabulary, grammar, discourse, and variety (Crystal, 1995).
- they are interdependent and one way to teach writing is to teach reading with a ‘writerly eye’; that is to examine how form and meaning interact in given texts and to discuss these observations in class (Kern, 2000).
- both contribute in developing metacognitive awareness (O’Malley and Chamot, 1990), by monitoring their comprehension process through self-reflection, guessing meaning from context, and through critical reading strategies that would promote their critical thinking skills (Ourghi, 2002)

**iii)** The meaningful and authentic teaching of *grammar and vocabulary* by associating the linguistic aspect to the cognitive aspect within the context of social interaction by

- consolidating knowledge acquired about grammar, vocabulary and syntax with writing organizational devices and techniques during the composing practice to understand how language works (Willis and Willis, 1996).
- suggesting a productive teaching of grammar and vocabulary by focusing on constructions typically found in texts, or highlighting the effects of grammatical features on context, discourse, and text (Hinkel , 2004).
- exposing students to different types of texts in order to acquire a large background of grammatical and vocabulary structures to use them in their written products.
- integrating the linguistic aspect through grammar and vocabulary accuracy consideration as part of the editing self/peer-editing practices. In this way, students will have practice in different learning strategies: cognitive, with grammar and vocabulary study; metacognitive, with self-reflection and self-evaluation; and social, with collaboration.
- training students in making grammatical choices while considering specific communicative contexts and raise their awareness about *why* a writer chooses specific grammatical structures rather than *what* the writer uses (Hughes, 2005).

**Example of an integrated grammar-writing activity:**

Instruction to students: Revise the following paragraph, proofread and add appropriate subordinating conjunctions.

*A great disaster hapened on 1857. The SS Central America sinked. This steamship was carrying six hundred wealthy passenger from California to New York. Many of them had recently struck golds. Battered by a storm, the ship began to flooding. Many people at board bailed water. Others prayed and quieted children. Thirty hours passed. A rescue boat arrives.*

*Almost two hundred people were safed. The rest died. Later, many banks failed. Three tons of gold had gone dawn with the ship.*

In this activity, students must correct the grammatical and lexical mistakes while being introduced to writing a narrative paragraph.

iv)As regards the **mechanics** which EFL students often find challenging, ways to improve **spelling** include

- reading extensively (Harmer, 2001).
- word processing, because spell-checkers enable students to notice their mistakes on the spot and even to learn how to correct them,
- meaningful class activities which engage learners in observing and deducing spelling rules through meaningful and varied tasks, with explicit lessons, and with frequent tests or quizzes. (see Shemesh and Waller, 2000)

As for **punctuation**, a more natural application of guidelines can be meaningfully taught through

- contextual analysis of rules governing the use of punctuation
- frequent activities involving the use of self- or peer-review
- discussion of rules of mechanics during reading sessions, while analyzing different types of texts.

### **Example of a punctuation activity**

**Step 1:** Notice the use of capital letters in the following expressions:

1. Mrs. Ashley, Mr. Brown, Lady Grey, Dr James, Professor Ayers, etc.
2. the Foreign Secretary, the Minister of Finance, etc.
3. Oxford Street, Hyde Park, Trafalgar Square, etc.
4. Lake Windermere, the River Thames, Mount Everest, etc.
5. Monday, Tuesday, January, Christmas Eve, New Year's Day, etc.
6. French, English, Englishmen, Spaniard, etc.

(Coe *et al*, 1983: 5)

**Step 2:** Deduce the rules, with the help of the teacher when necessary.

Capitalise nationalities, languages, races and religions Capitalise specific countries, states, cities, and buildings Capitalise months, days and holidays, but not seasons Capitalise professional titles only when a person is named Capitalise geographic locations, but not directions
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(Fawcett and Sandberg, 2002: 327)

**Step 3:** Practise the deduced rules in a meaningful way.

In this extract from a job application letter, the capital letters are left out. Insert them where necessary.

i wish to apply for the clerical position advertised in the canberra times, saturday, 31 <sup>st</sup> january. at present i am working for the department of finance. althoughi have
---

only been there since november, i have gained a wide variety of lexperience in clerical duties. in addition, i worked for the abc for one year as a pay clerk in 1984.

(Brown and Hood, 1989: 36)

As can be noticed, this activity combines teaching punctuation with the introduction of a specific genre: writing an application letter.

**b) Writing as Composing**

Learners should know different types of writing required for different purposes; these are called rhetorical modes of discourse: narrative, descriptive, expository, and argumentative. Rhetorical modes refer to the types of text organisation. It is necessary to choose the mode that corresponds to the text type, in order to develop the given topic. The explicit description of each mode will help learners make appropriate grammatical and lexical choices; accordingly, an understanding of writing modes will assist learners achieve an effective writing. Each type has a slightly different structure:

**Rhetorical modes: Types and Purposes (adapted from Hedge, 1988:99)**

Rhetorical mode	Types and Purposes
<b>Narrative</b>	Tells a sequence of events in a report or a biography. Two types of narration can be distinguished: fiction (imaginary), or non-fiction (true facts/events)
<b>Descriptive</b>	<b>Static description:</b> describing a place, a person, a system <b>Process description:</b> describing the sequence of steps in how something is done or the operations in how something works.
<b>Expository</b>	It is used to explain, inform, illustrate, or analyse. It can be expressed through different modes: <b>definition:</b> defining, explaining, and exemplifying something <b>classification:</b> organising a description into a hierarchy of categories <b>cause-effect:</b> explaining how events are linked, how one thing leads to another, giving reasons for outcomes <b>comparison-contrast:</b> discussing similarities and differences.
<b>Argumentative</b>	It is used mainly to persuade the reader of a given point. <b>Discussion:</b> putting forward arguments, evidence, examples, etc.

Students should also be introduced to differences between academic and non-academic writing and so avoid the ‘freewriting style’ they usually write in, as this table may illustrate (Hamp-Lyons and Heasley, 2006: 17):

	<b>Academic</b>	<b>Non-academic</b>
<b>Reader</b>	Academics	family and friends
<b>Content</b>	Serious thought	Conversational
<b>Style</b>	complex sentences showing considerable variety in construction	mostly simple and compounds sentences joined by conjunctions such as ‘and’ or ‘but’

<b>Organization</b>	clear and well-planned	less likely to be as clear and as organized
<b>Grammar</b>	likely to be error free	may not always use complete sentences
<b>Vocabulary</b>	technical and academic language used accurately	use of short forms, idioms and slang

Building awareness of these patterns would be of great help for learners' proficiency in writing as well as in reading skills. Besides, they ought to be formed in different writing tasks and for different purposes and genres via explicit strategic lessons (Cotteral and Cohen, 2003). Hyland (2003: 87) insists that the texts selected should be authentic and relevant to the students, representing the genres they will have to write in their target (real-world) contexts rather than in classrooms. Therefore, the teacher has to make an account of the required university writing tasks, rhetorical modes and genres to practise them in and outside the classroom. Genre pedagogy seems then to be more relevant to university writing requirements since students will be mostly required to write reports, articles, summaries, outlines, abstracts, research papers, formal letters and essays (Hamzaoui, 2010).

## 5. Conclusion

This paper has presented some classroom applications to implement for teaching writing at university level, based on the findings of the research study conducted earlier. The suggested teaching framework combines principles from CALLA, CAW, and WAC. The writing approach proved successful in developing students' metacognitive awareness in writing, and in improving students' academic results in writing and EFL learning. Therefore, there emerges a necessity to value writing as a learning, composing, and testing tool that can further learners' competence in EFL learning. The overall implications are that when students attempt different learning strategies in the writing class, relying on themselves and collaborating with peers, they gradually get rid of (over)reliance on teachers. With the suggested model, students develop autonomy through self-monitoring thanks to metacognitive awareness and self and peer editing/evaluation; in addition, they can access more information through CAW. Thus, they can learn in class and out of class with and without the teacher, and improve both in writing and in EFL learning. This paper has suggested a number of classroom practices using the described instructional model, in the hope of innovating university writing pedagogy and alleviating EFL students' linguistic, composing and learning difficulties.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix A: Self-editing Sheet (Example: The paragraph)

Writer.....Date.....

<b>Format</b>		
My paragraph is correctly formatted	yes	no
<b>Organisation</b>		
My paragraph begins with a topic sentence and ends with a concluding sentence.	yes	no
I use listing order to organize my paragraph	yes	no
I use transitions to signal each main point	yes	no
<b>Sentence Structure</b>		
Every sentence has at least one S V and expresses		



a complete thought	yes	no
<b>Punctuation, capitalisation, an spelling</b>		
I put a period after every sentence.	yes	no
I used capital letters correctly.	yes	no
I checked my spelling.		yes
no		
<b>Personal</b>	<b>grammar</b>	<b>trouble</b>
<b>Number found and corrected</b>		<b>spots</b>
I checked my paragraph for .....errors		
(verb tense, article, etc)		

(Hogue, 2008: 196)

**Appendix B: Peer-editing Sheet**

**Example: Paragraph Format**

**Peer editor:.....Date.....**

1. Is the paragraph interesting?	Yes
no	
.....	
2. Do you understand everything?	Yes
no	
.....	
3. Would you like more information on the topic?	Yes
no	
.....	
4. Does the paragraph contain a topic sentence and a concluding sentence?	Yes
no	
.....	
5. Is the paragraph well structured?	Yes
no	
.....	
6. In your opinion, what is the best feature of this paragraph?	Yes
no	
.....	

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**Adapted from Hogue (2008: 201)**

**Appendix C: A Scoring Rubric for Tests (Example: The paragraph)**

	<b>Maximum score</b>	<b>Actual score</b>
Format	<b>5</b>	.....
Punctuation and mechanics	<b>5</b>	.....
Content	<b>20</b>	.....
Organization	<b>35</b>	.....
Grammar and sentence structure	<b>35</b>	.....
<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	.....

**Adapted from Oshima and Hogue (2007: 196)**

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**Forums:** virtual meeting places where people can express opinion

**Blogs:** the term is short for *web log*, a web-based log or diary that can be seen by other people. Some students use blogs to keep friends up to date with their news.

**Wikis:** A wiki is a collaborative web space, consisting of a number of pages that can be edited by any user. A wiki is an excellent tool for collaborative writing in the ESL classroom. Wikis are simple interactive pages that a number of individuals can access and modify by adding and editing content.

<sup>ii</sup> An example of **OWLs** is that of Purdue Online Writing Laboratory (<https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/>)