Note from the Editor

Welcome to our inaugural issue of the NMTESOL Journal. The goal of this publication is to provide space for local and regional academics to publish and share relevant research and ideas. We are happy to share with you four articles from your colleagues. The articles in this issue address various questions regarding our diverse student population in New Mexico.

We hope that this issue can serve as a provocation to hear more from those in our scholarly community.

In addition, I would like to thank the committee and the board for their dedication and support for this publication.

Sincerely, Amy
Paving the Path for Arabic L1 Speakers

Lora M. Beseler

Native speakers of the Arabic language (L1s) encounter unique challenges in learning English as a second language (L2s) due to marked differences between Arabic and English orthographies, language structures, grammar rules, rhetorics, and cultural issues. These differences result in negative transfer of language skills from the Arabic L1 to the acquisition of English as an L2 (Hayes-Harb, 2006, pp. 334-335). It has been demonstrated that non-Arabic L1s from ethnicities using dissimilar orthographies from Arabic and English do not experience the same or similar challenges as the Arabic L1s (2006, pp. 334-335). This means that an instructor should not compare Arabic L2 work product to non-Arabic L2 work product. By raising the awareness of instructors as to the challenges faced by Arabic L1s in learning English, the instructor of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) or English as a Second Language (ESL) can ease the learning of English by Arabic L1 students.

Grammar

Arabic is a language with a 28-letter alphabet (Abu Rabia, Shakkour, & Siegel, 2013, p. 67). Each letter has four written forms (Abu Rabia et al., 2013, p. 67): the letter as it stands independently; the letter as it begins a word; the letter as it occurs in the middle of a word, and the letter as it appears at the end of a word. Alphabetic text is read from right to left (Abu Rabia et al., 2013, p. 67), while numerals are read from the left to the right. The Arabic alphabet includes no “p” (Thompson-Panos & Thomas-Ružić, 1983, p. 611), which may result in the student using a “b” in English instead of a “p”, as English words in Arabic script are spelled so in that situation. For example: the tradename “Pepsi” becomes “Bebsi” in Arabic. Students are aware of this difference in the orthography, and if an instructor is seeing a lapse in spelling due to the “b” and “p”, it is not an error or mistake that requires much fretting on the instructor’s part. It is, more than likely, a matter of forgetfulness on the part of the student. A gentle reminder, on occasion, may be all that is required. Additionally, there are no capital letters in Arabic (Thompson-Panos & Thomas-Ružić, 1983, p. 610), so capitalization exercises may be quite useful. The instructor may notice that a student does not write or print on the line. This is because Arabic students write through lines, not above the line (1983, p. 610).

Short vowel sounds are represented by diacritical marks; common marks include:

below the consonant    above the consonant
[left to right, “i”, “o”, and “a” respectively].

Consonants are vowelled; that is, the diacritical marks are placed above and below consonants to indicate the appropriate short vowel sound in the word. The only texts in Arabic that are consistently vowelled in written text are formal documents, the Qur’an, classical literature, and children’s books. Advanced readers of Arabic read without the diacritical marks, and these advanced readers understand the meaning of a text based on sentence or paragraph context (Tryzna & Ivanov, 2015, p. 209; see also Hayes-Harb, 2006, p. 322). Abu Rabia (1997, p. 140) writes that advanced Arabic readers rely heavily on context to glean meaning. Beginning readers start learning to read with fully vowelled written texts. Little by little, as the learner’s abilities progress, the diacritical marks are removed (Palmer, El-Ashry, Leclere, & Chang, 2007). In this way, Arabic readers attain advanced reading skills without the use of the diacritical marks. An example of diacritical marks used in a word is as follows: The word maktab (desk, office) مكتب. If we encounter the words شرب شرب, they appear to be the same words; however, when vowelling is added in شرب شرب, they are, in fact, two different words: drink and the past participle, drunk (Noor, 1996, p. 1444).

To demonstrate once more, the following are three different words; however, they appear to be the same
A beginning reader cannot pronounce and is not able to read these words because there is no vowelling, nothing to tell the learner what sounds to make (Abu Rabia, 1997, pp. 140-143). When the diacritical marks for vowels are added in, 

\[
\text{ل}, \text{ل}, \text{ل}.
\]

...every, the difference in words is made clear (Abu Rabia, 1997, p. 140).

[Note: the diacritical mark ْ, a *sukun*, tells the reader that no vowel follows the consonant.]

The Arabic language is based on trilateral consonantal roots (a pattern of consonants) for the formation of words. For example, the root k-t-b is the foundation of words (*kitaab*, *maktab*, *maktaba*) such as book, desk, and library (Hayes-Harb, 2006, p. 323). Arabic words are semantically related (the foregoing words all relate to writing); this is not often the case in English (Ryan & Meara, 1991, p. 533). The English words *pint*, *paint*, and *point* are made up of a consonant cluster of p-n-t; yet, these words are not semantically related (Hayes-Harb, 2006, p. 323). It is the root pattern that gives Arabic speakers lexical information (2006, p. 324). The problem that arises for Arabic L1 learners learning to read and write in English is the appearance of English consonant clusters; the student may find him or herself reading English consonant clusters as unwavilled Arabic text (Hayes-Harb, 2006, p. 322). This accounts for negative transfer and slow-down of English reading and comprehension speeds as the Arabic L1s use higher processing skills to overcome this challenge (2006, p. 322). As a result, Arabic L1 learners require more time in reading English. It is worth pointing out that Arabic dictionaries, phone books, and the like are based on the root, consonantal, system, not on an alphabetic system as in English (Thompson-Panos & Thomas-Ružić, 1983, p. 613). One must know a word’s consonant pattern in order to find the Arabic word in the dictionary; therefore, take the time to teach Arabic L1s how to use the English alphabetic dictionary. Dictionary exercises will provide added opportunities for practicing spelling, learning vocabulary, learning word formations and usages (Barry, 2014, pp. 22-23). All of that impacts fluency. Students’ writing skills will be enhanced if instructors teach dictionary use, particularly in the analyses of words and their derivational uses (Thompson-Panos & Thomas-Ružić, 1983, p. 613).

The definite article in Arabic is *al*; it corresponds to the English *the*. It is placed before subject or proper nouns, zero nouns, and direct objects. *Al*, however, does not stand alone as a word, but is a prefix attached to the noun (Barry, 2014, p. 28). For example: *al-beit jamil* or *the beautiful house*. (An adjective follows its noun in Arabic.) There is no indefinite article in Arabic, so that it is often the absence of *al* that will indicate indefiniteness (Thompson-Panos & Thomas-Ružić, 1983, p. 614). Learners frequently fail to understand the function of the English indefinite article, and they do not understand, then, which indefinite article (*a* or *an*) to use (Tryzna & Ivanov, 2015, p. 211). Misunderstanding English article functions leads to an underuse, or overuse of the articles, particularly with non-countable or zero nouns, and plurals (2015, p. 208). Instructors, then, need to focus on the functions and usages of English articles.

Because there is no copula (usually a *be* verb) in Arabic, omission of a copula in English is a common error (Thompson-Panos & Thomas-Ružić, 1983, pp. 614-615). Omission of the copula and auxiliaries in the L2 is a negative transfer from the L1 (Yorkey, 1977, p. 66). If we return to our previous example, “al-beit jamil”, it may be read as “[the] beautiful house” or “[T]he house is beautiful”. Context will determine the meaning for the L2 learner. It may be useful for the instructor to devise linking exercises that connect the subject to the predicate so that, through repetition, the exercise will help to overcome the negative transfer from Arabic.

Because there are only two tenses in Arabic, the perfect and imperfect (but both highly aspected), it is necessary to concentrate on verb forms, derivations, and usages (Thompson-Panos & Thomas-Ružić, 1983, pp. 614-17). Arabic L1s will often omit the *s* on the third person singular and the *s* on plural

There are no relative pronouns in Arabic, so that forming relative clauses is troublesome for L2 learners (Thompson-Panos & Thomas-Ružić, 1983, p. 617). Yorkey (1977, pp, 76-79) recommends step-by-step exercises to teach relative clause formations. He suggests exercises in which the student first learns to substitute a pronoun for the nominal, a word or structure that functions as a noun, and insert the relative pronoun to join the clauses (Yorkey, 1977, p. 67). In the next exercise step, the student learns the object deletion rule, which asks what function the relative pronoun performs in the dependent clause: subject or object? (1977, p. 67). If the function of the relative pronoun is that of an object, then the student may delete it (1977, p. 67). Finally, in the third and last step, Yorkey (1977, p. 68) advises that the student must be taught to delete the pronoun object. Thompson-Panos and Thomas-Ružić (1983, p. 618) provide an example of Yorkey’s teaching process: “1. My father (He) smokes cigars. My father gets the cigars (them) from Havana. 2. My father smokes cigars (which) he gets (them) from Havana. 3. My father smokes cigars ( ) from Havana.”

Arabic has various connectors, but *wa* [and] is by far the most common conjunction. It is acceptable in Arabic to begin a sentence or paragraph with *wa* (Barry, 2014, p. 8). More importantly, *wa* connects two clauses which are related in meaning; the second clause, although a new thought, must be logically related in meaning to the first clause (Sa’adeddin, 1987, p. 184). Koch (1983, p. 49) gives a sample clause of this coordination: “at the end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth”. (See also the following section discussing rhetoric.) This use of *wa* in Arabic is discussed by Barry (2014, p.14) as resulting in run-on sentences in the English L2. Sa’adeddin (1987, p. 186) suggests using slash / marks as an exercise to separate sentence units. To a large extent, the mechanics of the *wa* conjunction also eliminate the use of commas in Arabic rhetoric, and this results in run-on sentences in English (Barry, 2014, p. 12); therefore, Barry suggests editing exercises in punctuation, and she recommends that those lessons be conducted as separate lessons from other topics (Barry, 2014, p. 41).

Other common mistakes involve improper use of prepositions due to very different usages and meanings of prepositions between the Arabic L1 and the English L2 (Yorky, 1977, p. 67). For example, there is no *at* preposition in Arabic, and the word *min* can mean both *from* or *to* in Arabic. Focus on prepositional meanings and exercises. Noor (1996, p. 1452) suggests exercises for connectors that are conjunctive (and, or, but) and subordinate (after, when, and because). Pronunciation practice can be done with minimal pair exercises (Yorkey, 1977, p. 71; see also Hayes-Harb, 2006, p. 336). Pronunciation can be practiced through echo reading exercises (Palmer, et al., 2007, p. 11), and through recitation reading (2007, p. 14). There is no neutral or third person *it* in Arabic; Arabic uses the male gendered word when *it* is required. Most pervasive is the negative transfer of the Arabic relator which is an affix or pronoun that refers back to the subject or object (Thompson-Panos & Thomas-Ružić, 1983, p. 618). Recognizable to instructors is a sentence such as: The girl she rides a bike. *She* is the relator that refers back to *[T]he girl* (1983, p. 618). Again, Yorkey (1977, pp. 76-79) suggests deletion and substitution exercises in order to overcome this negative transfer.

**Rhetoric**

English and Arabic rhetorics form in very different ways. As a result, Arabic L1s experience a negative transfer when attempting to write in the target language; it is natural to process according to one’s own culture (Alptekin, 1993, p. 137). “Writers not only construct mental representations of their socially acquired knowledge, but such schematic knowledge also influences their writing in various areas such as the rhetorical organization of a text, audience awareness, and topical priorities, etc.
(Alptekin, 1993, p. 138). Leki (1991, p. 138) writes that “Students who are having trouble writing in English and who are made aware of cultural differences in rhetoric suddenly view themselves, not as suffering from individual inadequacies, but as coming from a particular rhetorical tradition, which they must retain.”

Both English and Arabic seek to persuade the reader. English achieves persuasion through means of subordination: a thesis, a topic sentence, supporting ideas, all of which result in a logically persuasive conclusion (Yorkey, 1977, p. 68). Western rhetoric achieves persuasion by means of a syllogistic proof (Shukri, 2014, p. 196); whereas, Arabic rhetoric achieves persuasion through means of presentation (Koch, 1983, p. 55). That is, the persuasion is the presentation itself (p. 55). An Arabic writer compiles and presents as much argument as possible in order to get his or her point across, thereby persuading the reader to the writer’s point of view (Shukri, 2014, p. 196; see also Koch, 1984, pp. 544-546). Presentation occurs through rhetorical devices such as repetition, paraphrasing, lexical roots, morpheme patterns, rewording with synonyms, and presenting the same idea from many different angles (Koch, 1984, p. 546). Koch (1984, p. 543) posits that the rhetorical device of repetition creates presence, and presence creates persuasion. Arabs have a strong oral tradition (Palmer, et al., 2007, p. 13), and in this oral tradition the more something is repeated, the more believable it becomes. (Koch, 1984, p. 543).

English L2 writing instructors, then, should concentrate on teaching subordination. The learner needs to be taught how to make structures subordinate, and how to identify which structure is subordinate to another structure both at the syntactical (sentence) level and at the rhetorical (paragraph) level (Thompson-Panos & Thomas-Ružić, 1983, p. 620). Thompson-Panos and Thomas-Ružić (1983, p. 621) suggest activities, such as paragraph completions, in which sentences have been deleted, and scrambled sentences requiring ordering, outlining, and assigning topic sentences that the learner will use to develop into an essay.

Yorkey (1977, p. 83) suggests using exercises that not only provide the topic sentence, but also provide sentences using the word because so that students develop supporting sentences (teaching relevance and subordination). For example: I love traveling in Italy because ____.

Culture

Language is culture-bound writes Citron (1995, p. 106). Culture transfers and interferes in L2 language acquisition, even at advanced levels (Saeed, 2004, p. 275). Further, Saeed (2004, p.275) writes that this interference is more complicated than grammatical interference. Shukri (2014, p. 194) believes that it is crucial for L2 instructors to understand the Arabic L1 culture in order to recognize why Arabic L1s are making errors in the L2, so that the instructors can properly address the learners’ errors. He further posits that instructors using a contrastive analysis in comparing L1 and L2 cultures will increase their learners’ comprehension abilities and their writing skills in the L2 (Shukri, 2014, p. 194).

Arab culture is family-centered, and one’s personal desires are subservient to the needs and desires of the family (Kohnke, 2011, p. 1369; see also Shukri, 2014, p. 194). It is a group-oriented and collectivistic culture with a comfort zone that exists in the group (Shukri, 2014, p. 194). Authority is found in the patriarchy, elders, and persons of authority (Kohnke, 2011, p. 1369).

Teachers are persons in a position of authority. Kohnke (2011, p. 1372) cites Arab Cultural Awareness for the position that “many students listen to their teachers as ‘authority figures and trust their judgment.’” Feedback from an L2 instructor carries great weight that will affect the Arabic L1 learner. Feedback should be positive and avoid negative criticism, and it should offer encouragement (Qaddomi, 2013, p. 1558). Arab females attribute great weight to opinions of others towards them; they may end up despising writing or withdraw from activity in a writing class due to negative feedback (Abu Shawish & Abdelraheem, 2010, p. 13). To illustrate the role of authority and
the effects of negative feedback, I offer two examples: 1. One day in Palestine I observed an ESL instructor harshly respond to a female Arabic L1 student who was a university instructor in the subjects of abstract algebra, Euclidean geometry, and statistics; it was not necessary to negatively react to this student. The harsh feedback from the ESL instructor caused the L2 student to drop the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) class, and, despite all my efforts, this student would not re-enroll in the course. 2. One day I myself, as an ESL instructor in Palestine, gave one of my students an apology for a small matter. This male Arabic L1 student replied to me thusly: “In my culture we respect our elders 100% and we must accept whatever an elder says to us whether we like it or not. Do Not ever apologize to me again!”

Shukri (2014, p. 198) relies on Kramsch for the idea that culture and language are inextricably intertwined. Because language functions within social contexts (Alptekin, 1993, p. 141), Arabic L1 learners have been conditioned into their cultural schema. When confronted with English L2 learning, Arabic L1s are confronted by a schema foreign to their own, and their cognitive skills are expended on processing unfamiliar schema, rather than focusing on only language structures (Alptekin, 1993, p. 140-141).


Embedded deep within the Arab family culture is the value of honor, and the avoidance of all shame. Like criticism, shame is to be avoided at all costs because, unlike Western cultures, shame does not inure to just the individual who caused the shame; it cloaks the entire family (Kohnke, 2011, p. 1369). Gossip is a certain source of shame (2011, p. 1369). Kohnke quotes Al-Khayyat to explain that this is so because, unless some sort of shameful behavior has occurred, the gossip would not follow (Kohnke, 2011, p. 1370). Instructors may then encounter parents who are not eager for their child to engage in internet use; the internet is viewed, not only as a distraction from the family and family values, but also as a wide open path to dishonor and shame (Kohnke, 2011, p. 1370). Instructors should be sensitive and aware that certain topics in Arab culture, such as religion, sex, family matters and relationships, politics, and death, are taboo (Shukri, 2014, p. 199).

Education in Arab countries is teacher-oriented, with learners being told what they are to learn and how to learn it (Shukri, 2014, p. 192). Learners are dependent on the teacher and learn by rote (2014, p. 193). As a result of this rote learning, Arabic L1s tend to be knowledge-tellers, and, therefore, they need to be taught how to think and write critically (Shukri, 2014, p. 196). Shukri (2014, p. 196) recommends that instructors develop activities that will teach learner autonomy.

In Arab cultures a professor or teacher is deemed to know all the information that a student might write about in his or her paper, so that no citation is necessary; in fact, a citation may well insult or disparage the teacher and his or her expertise (Washington State University Libraries, 2017). Another perspective regarding plagiarism attributes the lack of crediting to the writer’s literal belief in the truth of the copied material, and so it is not considered stealing (de Berly, 2012). Additionally, Shukri (2014, p. 197) muses that the copying of an idea may demonstrate a respect through imitation.

An instructor’s awareness of the reasoning behind an Arabic student’s common errors or mistakes in
learning English will enable the instructor to create assignments and activities that help the L2 student overcome syntactical, rhetorical, and cultural differences and difficulties in acquiring the English target. Additionally, the savvy instructor will better be able to address error correction. Likewise, a student who is aware of syntactical, and rhetorical differences will be better equipped to notice his or her errors and to self-correct (Swain, 1998, pp. 66-67). Finally, as an added benefit to the student, Abu Rabia et al. (2013, p. 77) points out that learning and understanding the English target will aid Arabic L1s to understand their own native tongue with deeper understanding.

References


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Writing Games in Both Adult and Young Adult EFL Classrooms

Janneth V. Chumaña

In a native context, writing is a complex and demanding process, but it is more complicated for students who are learning a second language because they not only need to coordinate cognitive skills and socio-cultural knowledge, they also have to master lower-level language skills such as grammar and vocabulary (Flower & Hayes, 1980; Hayes, 2000; Torrance & Galbraith, 2006; Myles, 2002; Schoonen, Snellings, Stevenson, & Van Gelderen, 2009). In order to help students to develop L2 writing, active techniques have been used. One of these techniques is the use of games. According to Jones (1982), games can promote students’ continuous learning. Also, Vygotsky (1978) states that “a child's greatest achievements are possible in play; achievements that tomorrow will become her basic level of real action and morality” (p.96). Vygotsky highlighted a child's development, and other scholars have demonstrated a solid accuracy of his hypothesis because his theories also support other children’s ages in language learning. For instance, the benefit for students who are learning another language as young adults is to allow them practice language skills which are listening, reading, speaking and writing (Ersöz, 2000). This paper shows why games can be considered a good tool to improve writing for both adults and young adults by mentioning some of Vygotsky’s academic approaches such as the role of the play in the child’s development, social-cultural theory, perezhivanie and conscious awareness.

The role of the play in development. Learning a foreign language is difficult because students need to strive for a long period of time to understand, produce and manipulate the target language. There are many students that have problems when they learn a second language, so it has been necessary to use an interesting, amusing, creative, challenging and useful technique to teach English as a foreign language. This technique is called “games.” Games attract students to participate and simultaneously enjoy learning. Many people think that learning should be serious and solemn in nature, which is not completely true since it is possible to learn a language as well as enjoy oneself at the same time (Lee, 1979). One of the best ways of doing this is through the use of games (Lee, 1995).

The idea of using games to engage students in the process of active learning is not new. Over the last years, EFL and TESOL educators have been increasingly incorporating several game techniques into their teaching curriculum to create an engaging environment for students. However, most of the games have been created to teach grammar and speaking, and not the writing skill, which is what I want to improve in both adults and young adults. The idea of using games is not only to improve vocabulary, spelling, organization, grammar and sentence structure in their writing, but it is also to change the student's perception about language writing process, as most of my students may find writing to be boring or difficult. At the same time, writing games can help to motivate and encourage students to write more often and be more competent in their second language.

Writing games can shape how students acquire a language because of the active learning component that is in each game. “Active learning engages and motivates diverse students in the learning process and has resulted in increased performance outcomes” (Mackenty, 2006). This active learning component makes students become engaged in the writing activities because they are not only expressing their thoughts through writing, they are also discovering, processing and applying new information. This active engagement is something that Vygotsky’s theory promotes in the classroom setting. This theory is social-cultural and is called the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD).

The Zone of Proximal Development

In the area of second language, writing games not only create active engagement, but also they can
create a zone of proximal development. This sociocultural process is discussed by Vygotsky and it is widely applied in many fields, like education. In fact, Vygotsky’s states,

Play creates a zone of proximal development of the child. In play the child always behaves beyond his average age, above his daily behavior; in play it is as though he were a head taller than himself. As in the focus of a magnifying glass, play contains all developmental tendencies in a condensed form and it itself a major source of development (1978, p. 17).

Even though Vygotsky talks about children learning process and play in development, writing games can have similar effects in the acquisition of young adult language since there are two levels of development of mental functions in both adults and young adults. The first level he called “the actual level of development” which can be detected by observing the learning tasks the young adult can solve individually and independently. The second level of the young adult’s development was labeled “the potential level”, which is detectable by the tasks the young adult can solve in co-operation with the teacher, (the young adults requires only minimal help or assistance from the teacher or more competent peers). In brief, at any specific time the student has two levels of development of his mental intellectual structures and functions. From this comes logically that there is or should be a distance between the levels. That distance is called ZPD. The zone of proximal development was defined by Vygotsky as

…the distance between the actual development level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult, guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers. (1978, p. 86, originally Vygotsky, 1935, p. 42).

In other words, ZPD is the area between what a student can do independently and what a student is capable of doing with targeted assistance. In order to create a ZPD with the writing games, the level of instruction should correspond to the level of child's development, but to be productive, efficient, and developmental, it should correspond to the level of potential development.

Vygotsky believed that learning occurs if the interaction takes place within the zone of one’s potential development. In fact, according to Mahn, Vygotsky “underscored the importance of collaboration and guidance” (2015). Writing games allow students to have interaction by communicating with their peers who are more proficient, and with their teachers in order to improve each other's conceptual potential. In fact, writing games allow students to have a substantial chance to receive the right kind of assistance at the particular stage when they need it because, within the ZPD, more capable students can assist their peers by providing new information and ways of thinking. In this way everybody can build new ways of understanding. Also, the interactions can benefit more experienced students because they can discover missing information, gain new insights and develop different ways of thinking. This shows what Vygotsky believed about learning; he said that learning is simultaneous to social interaction and exploration (Vygotsky, 1978).

In this context, writing games create social interactions and exploration. Additionally, within the ZPD, students are supported to internalize and demonstrate independent ability or ownership of new learning. The term used to describe this support is “scaffolding” which is “a support system that help students achieve success on tasks that would be too difficult for them to achieve by themselves” (Wood, Bruner, & Ross, 1976).

Writing games can be another tool that can be considered by teachers, to fulfill one of their responsibilities in a classroom setting which is, to create structuring interactions and to develop
instruction incrementally. This includes activities that students are able to perform it and provides the students support (scaffolding), until the learner can do it independently. These activities are created and developed considering “what the learner already knows in other familiar, everyday contexts” (Zeuli, 1986).

**Perezhivanie**

In order to continue citing the benefits that games can have in helping students learn L2 writing, it is necessary to mention the term “perezhivanie.” Vygotsky was the first person who used this term in his writings and this term is closely related to other concepts such as the social situation of development, the zone of the proximal development, developmental crises, etc. There are some definitions of perezhivanie, but the one that will be used in this paper will be the one that is translated as “lived experience.” This concept is very important in the educational field because students can learn better if their perezhivanie is positive. As teachers, we need to take notice about a student’s classroom experiences. It is inclusive of the surrounding conditions, as these conditions affect the person, how they perceive the environment, how they feel about the situations, and how they cope with them. Therefore, teachers need to be careful when they choose learning activities and everything that is said and done in the classroom setting. In order to create a positive perezhivanie (lived experience), writing games have been developed. Playing writing games to develop writing skills can help students to relate to writing with positive feelings, like enjoyment, pleasure, challenge and satisfaction. These positive feelings not only build a positive perezhivanie but also, they improve the process of students’ learning. Vygotsky described perezhivanie thus:

The emotional experience [perezhivanie] arising from any situation or from any aspect of his environment, determines what kind of influence this situation or this environment will have on the child.

Therefore, it is not any of the factors themselves (if taken without the reference of the child) which determines how they will influence the future course of his development, but the same factors refracted through the prism of the child’s emotional experience [perezhivanie]. (“The Problem of the Environment,” Vygotsky, p. 4)

In this way Vygotsky (1994) establishes how cognition and emotion are dynamically related. Therefore, there is no doubt that all student’s knowledge begins with experience. Using writing games, teachers can help students have positive experiences that allow them associate writing as something that is fun and at the same time improves their language abilities.

**Conscious awareness.** There is another effect that writing games may produce in the process of young adult foreign language learning. When students play, students can have positive perezhivanie because games are related with pleasure and enjoyment. These feelings make student interested in the activity and so they are focused and apply conscious awareness into the learning process.

According Mylnikova, “Vygotsky consciousness is a physical activity that reflects the reality and conscious awareness is an internal awareness that enable continuous tracking of the current emotional experiences” (2016). Using classroom writing games, I have observed that students perform the games deliberately with intention and with effort. Also, they are engaged in the activity because they are doing something that is related to their interests. I have seen that they are motivated and they use cooperative learning to write the best story, so their work is chosen as the best one. For example, when students play the game called “Guessing the place”, they work together while they are showing that they have fun trying to find out specific characteristics of a place that they need to describe. Following, this
paper will mention reasons why writing games should be used to improve writing performance.

**Reasons to Use Writing Games**

After mentioning academic approaches to support writing games, this paper will also mention some explanations why writing games can help students’ learning. According to Moreno (2012) there are psychological, pedagogical and linguistic reasons.

**Psychological reasons.** According to Hansen (as cited in Uberman, 1998) writing games encourage shy students to participate in class because they feel more comfortable sharing their ideas when they are in small groups and not in front of the whole class. Writing games also improve social interaction with their peers and teachers. This social interaction helps students use mutual support and improve their abilities to work collaboratively with their peers to obtain a goal. Richard-Amato’s study (as cited in Uberman, 1998) says writing activities can lower anxiety, making the acquisition of language input more likely. This means writing games decrease anxiety in classroom, and reduced anxiety can be very important to obtain more success at developing writing. Here, it is necessary to mention Krashen’s affective-filter hypothesis which says that student’s ability to acquire language is inhibited if learners are experiencing negative emotions such as fear, anxiety, or embarrassment, nervousness, or boredom (1981). Writing games encourage low affective-filters because the atmosphere is pleasant and students do not feel afraid of making a mistake while they are writing. This helps students improve their learning.

Finally, the use of writing games increases motivation and interest which are important factors to improve learning since highly motivated students learn faster. The use of writing games creates more active classes according to Lengeling and Malarcher, (1997).

**Pedagogical reasons.** Writing games try to promote learner-centeredness because activities are focused on student needs and individual learning styles. In fact, to create the writing games, the teacher considers not only the student’s interests, likes, goals, background, age, and proficiency in English, but also considers what motivates young adults to learn and how language can be organized in learning situations. That means that everything that is planned by the teacher is focused on the student, who builds his knowledge while the teacher acts only as a facilitator. In addition, these activities create cohesion among students and between the student and teacher, foster whole class participation and promote healthy competition. Besides, S. M. Silver says (as cited in Uberman, 1998) writing games create a relaxed atmosphere which helps real learning (1982) because sometimes some students feel stressed and do not see the advantages of learning a foreign language; they can only see problems that at times seem overwhelming. Likewise, Rixon states (as cited in Uberman, 1998) these activities can be used in all the stages of the lesson and they are easy to adjust to any age, level and interest.

**Linguistic reasons.** Writing games allow students to practice some branches of linguistics. For instance, in the writing process students can apply the sets of rules for creating well-formed sentences in a language, which is the application of a branch of linguistics called syntax.

Games are used to provide students the opportunity to learn, practice or review any grammatical structure. In fact, these activities can be used to promote writing in a pleasant and entertaining way. Also, they are employed in real contexts and the language is useful and meaningful. Likewise, they enable learners to acquire new experiences with a foreign language which can be difficult to have during typical classroom lessons. Adding fun to the classroom activities, it is possible to introduce new ideas and new knowledge.

Writing games are fun and encourage students to keep their interest and effort in writing. They are great tools for teachers because they help to create real contexts that have useful and meaningful
language. Many experienced methodology writers mention that games have a great educational value. For example, in Lee’s study (as cited in Uberman, 1998) she mentions that games make learners use the language instead of thinking about learning the correct form. In order to use writing games, it is necessary to consider some teaching strategies.

**Teaching Strategies**

When a teacher uses writing games, it is important to take into consideration strategies for teaching which improve the benefits of the writing games. The most important teaching strategies are: strategies to join previous and new knowledge, motivation strategies, transference strategies, discipline strategies and cooperative strategies.

**Strategies to join previous knowledge with the new information.** New knowledge is born from a previous experience, so it is necessary that the teacher activates previous knowledge using some strategies such as semantic maps, round table, true or false questions and other various methods. When the previous knowledge is known, the teachers can add a new concept using meaningful learning in order to help students to build their knowledge faster. Writing games not only aids the acquisition of a language, but also they foster students’ wishes to learn. In order to do this, writing games have to have some features.

**Motivation strategies.** Motivation is an important factor that improves students’ capacity to learn, so teachers have to use it constantly. Motivation makes people have interest in doing something in the classroom. The interest can be acquired, maintained, and increased using intrinsic and extrinsic elements. One of the ways to encourage students is taking into consideration students’ likes, interests and dislikes (Navarrete, 2009). For instance, in order to create writing games, student’s interests, likes, background, goals, dreams must be considered.

**Strategies to transfer knowledge.** It is a group of activities used to transmit knowledge and experiences that ease the use or application of the new knowledge. There are two types of transference: positive and negative. In the positive transference, the previous knowledge eases the new knowledge while in the negative transference; the previous knowledge interferes with the learning of the new knowledge (Ladislao, 2013)

**Discipline strategies.** The discipline strategy is related with the management of the class. The teacher must manage the class well to have fewer behavior problems while working. In order to meet this goal, the teacher has to design a motivational plan for the class and have clear expectations with defined consequences for the students’ behavior (Barrera, 2008).

**Strategies for cooperative learning.** These strategies stimulate the interaction between peers which helps the development of language and learning of concepts and contents. In order to have cooperative learning, the students have to work in groups in order to share their experiences, abilities and knowledge so that they can learn together. Every member must have a different function which has to be rotated to make students develop different abilities (Martínez, 2009).

**Characteristics of writing activities**

According to Ortiz (2005), writing games must have some characteristics which are: to create interest, to improve qualities to be an effective team player, and to apply, strengthen, and evaluate acquired knowledge.

**To create interest.** One of the teacher’s responsibilities is to create interest in learning a new language, meaning the students should want to learn rather than being forced to participate in the class. In order to do this, the teacher has to encourage students and develop a good attitude about the target language. Writing games have to improve the student’s interest in writing while they are improving their vocabulary, punctuation, and grammar.
To improve qualities to be an effective team player. One of the responsibilities of teachers is to help students know how to be an effective team player. Using games students can understand what teamwork looks like because the teacher can list some of the behaviors during the game. For instance, the teacher can tell them that good team player works toward the understood goal of the team, contributes to an informal, comfortable, and tension-free work environment, etc (Deeter-Schmelz, Keneddy & Ramsey, 2002). Working in groups is going to aid students to improve their social relations with their peers. It is important to mention that teams need to have strong players to perform well and each member has to demonstrate reliability, constructive communication and active listening in order to be a good team member. Each member has to fulfill certain functions such as sharing openly and willingly, cooperating, helping, exhibiting flexibility, showing commitment to the team, working as a problem-solver, and treating others in a respectful and supportive manner. When teachers use writing games, students will have the chance to apply all of these tips to be active participants (Mercedes, 2012).

To apply, strengthen and evaluate acquired knowledge. Writing games permit students to practice the skill of writing and to perform many types of communication. They are worth paying attention to and should be implemented in the classroom because they foster communicative competence. These activities allow students to apply, review and evaluate new knowledge because learners can recall information in an amusing and interesting way (Chacón, 2008).

Types of Writing Games

According to Johnson (1981), these games can be classified in two kinds which are: Cooperative and Competitive.

Cooperative writing games. Students are usually divided in small groups and the teacher encourages students to work together to maximize their learning. They are highly motivated because the activities are amusing and challenging. Students can learn important cooperative social skills that they will need later in their working lives. Besides, learners learn better when they also help each other. According to (Omeñaca Cilla & Omeñaca Moya, 2009) cooperative games help all students participate and foster their cognitive, affective and social development. Also, (Jares, 1992) states that cooperative games build positive social relationships among students and student and teacher. In these activities, there is no elimination, student’s individual abilities are valued and all the participants enjoy the activity since there is mutual collaboration. Some of the writing games that can be in these groups are: Guessing the celebrity, recognizing the movie, creating a story using cartoons, etc.

Competitive writing games. In these writing games, learners are encouraged to do their best, use independent thinking, and efforts are encouraged and rewarded. They are motivated to participate because even though they can still work in teams, they are also competing against other teams, which can be a great way to “enliven” the classroom environment. Morán, (2015) says that competition can be positive if the developed activities benefit friendship, and winners’ and losers’ efforts are valued at the same level. Some of the competitive writing games are: Stop the hand, Two truths and lies, Chains, Guessing the celebrity, the problem solving box, etc. Following are the explanations how to play the games: Guessing the Celebrity and the Problem Solving Box.

One Example of Cooperative Writing Game

Writing game “GUESSING THE CELEBRITY”

Area: Foreign LanguageSubject: English
Professor: Janneth Chumaña
Skill: Writing
Learner: 17 to 28 years old
Time: 30 minutes
Level: Second level (A2)
Objective: To do a description of a celebrity while students practice past tense and present perfect.

Methodology:
Active learning is done through writing games. Students work in groups to describe a celebrity that it is chosen by them. They need to apply tenses required by the teacher.

Activity 1: The teacher divides the class in groups. Students choose a celebrity. Students work in groups to describe him or her. In the description, they need to write important facts that will make their classmates guess the celebrity.

The groups present their celebrity but they do not mention the name. The members of each group have one minute to guess the celebrity’s name.

Every group writes the celebrity’s name on a small paper and hands it to the teacher. The group who made the description shows the celebrity’s picture.

The written names are read out loud so it is possible to know which groups did guess the celebrity’s name. If the teacher desires, a point can be given to each winning group. When all celebrities have been discovered, the group with more points can get a reward.

All the groups discuss later the facts related with the celebrity.

Each group writes a final paragraph which includes information from their discussions. It should contain information that they discussed in the class.

Source: Google web page

**One Example of Competitive Writing Game**

Writing game “THE PROBLEM SOLVING BOX”

Area: Foreign Language Subject: English
Professor: Janneth Chumaña

Skill: Writing Learner: 17 to 28 years old
Time: 30 minutes
Level: Second level (A2)

Objective: To write about real difficulties that people face in their lives and the written comments are put it in a box. Then, Students need to give suggestions to solve the issue.

Methodology:
Active learning is done through writing games. Students work in groups to give suggestions about difficulties. They need to apply tenses required by the teacher.

Activity:
The teacher divides the class in groups of three. Every group has to write about two real problems and put these papers in the problem solving box. They should not write their names on the papers. The teacher takes the papers one by one and reads the problem to the students. The students work together to think as many suggestions as they can to resolve the problem.

After some minutes, students switch their suggestion drafts with other groups. Every group has suggestions that belong to other group and they read them in silence.

Students chose the best suggestions and read them aloud to the whole class. The whole class discusses if they are good for the problem.

Students count how many suggestions they have and the group who has more well- structured sentences get a point.

After reading some problems, the points will be counted to see which group is the winner. The winner can receive a reward.

Source: Google web page

**Final Thoughts**

Games are not new, but they can be also used to develop writing with language learners. As teachers, we need to look at all the ways to make our students write better in L2 and to help them enjoy writing. These games can be a perfect aid to obtain these two objectives. They can be a useful aid to encourage
creativity and foster imagination in EFL students. Writing games have the purpose of developing students’ basic writing skills and are considered a valuable tool that complement and boost teachers and students activities. Finally, they can present an opportunity to enhance student learning and activate previous knowledge.

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Introduction

It is indisputable that effective English writing has been a challenge in English language teaching and learning. In fact, many students claim that developing English language writing competence is the most difficult so they require teachers’ help to overcome their struggles until they become competent English writers. In order to address particular problems of students’ L2 writing, researchers have proposed metacognition as one of the solutions. In fact, many studies suggest that metacognition not only can help students to become better writers, but also it “may assist L2 educators to develop a better L2 composition pedagogy” (Xiao, 2016, p. 14).

This paper will expand teachers’ knowledge related to the differences among good and poor writers. The literature review will provide new insights about the benefits of metacognition to improve writing. Metacognition has been used to know the variables that make students successful or unsuccessful in writing in order to help teachers and student writers. This paper will also provide an overview of metacognitive instructions that have been implemented with successful results in order to improve students’ performance in writing.

By providing an overview of some studies related the differences among good and poor writers and metacognitive instructions, this research pretends to help students to become better effective writers, to expand teachers’ understanding of the role of metacognition in L2 writing, and to encourage teachers to apply new pedagogical practices to improve students’ effectiveness when they write.

Metacognition. The term metacognition emerged in the 1970’s and has “yielded extensive insights into ESL/EFL learners’ complex cognitive processes” (Xiao, 2016, p. 6). Various terms including metacognitive theory, meta-learning, and self-management, have been used to represent the concept of metacognition by researchers. Metacognition is defined as “thinking about thinking” (Flavell, 1979, p. 906). A more refined definition is “a higher order executive process that monitors and coordinates other cognitive processes engaged during learning such as recall, rehearsal, or problem solving” (Tobias & Everson, 2009, p. 108).

Also, metacognition is defined as awareness about one’s processes in learning, and the appraisal and regulation of these processes. According to Wenden (1998), metacognitive knowledge and metacognitive strategies are two separate and distinct components of the broader notion of metacognition (p. 516). The first component refers to “individuals’ awareness of the cognitive resources learners possess and the compatibility between themselves as learners and their learning” (Xiao, 2016, p. 7).

Wenden (1998) defined metacognitive knowledge as “the stable and sometimes fallible knowledge learners acquire about themselves as learners and the learning process” (p. 185). Influenced by Flavell (1979), Wenden (1998) divided metacognitive knowledge into three components which are 1) personal knowledge (the individual’s beliefs about the knowledge they have acquired which can facilitate and inhibit their learning), 2) task knowledge (people’s knowledge about the task, such as the purpose), and 3) strategic knowledge (people’s knowledge to decide which strategy to use, when, how and why to use it (p. 518).

On the other hand, metacognitive strategies are skills, approaches, and actions learners use to monitor the writing processes consciously and to evaluate the effectiveness of writing actions. According to O’Malley and Chamot (1990), metacognitive strategies are classified into three categories: 1) planning (advanced organization and organizational planning), 2) monitoring (checking, verifying, or correcting one’s comprehension or
performance of the task), and 3) evaluating (production evaluation, performance evaluation, ability evaluation, strategy evaluation, and language evaluation) (cited in Lv, 2010, p. 136).

**Metacognition and learning.** Metacognition has a direct relationship to the different ways students learn. If learners are aware of their mental activities, they will be able to reflect upon, monitor, and employ corrective strategies to review and regulate their cognitive activities. Instructors should teach students how to know about and regulate their cognition. Xiao (2007) mentions that “in the last two decades, researchers have attempted to discover the metacognitive knowledge and strategies that students need to be equipped with in order to gain metacognitive awareness and make metacognitive judgments and choices” (p. 22). Also, in the field of language learning, Wenden (1998) asserted that “a good language learner’ is someone who is metacognitively aware of the processes in language learning and uses metacognitive, cognitive, and socioaffective strategies flexibly and effectively” (as cited in Zhang, 2010, p. 286).

**Metacognition and ESL/EFL writing instruction.** Studies have been done in relation to metacognition and writing because the results of some studies have clearly indicated that there is a link between metacognition and writing performance. For example, Negretti (2012) says that his research Metacognition in Student Academic Writing “has explained how and why metacognition plays a role in the way that students make different writing choices, specifically, the study highlights the connection among task perception; different types of metacognitive awareness; metacognitive monitoring, and self-regulation” (p. 171). Researchers want to apply metacognitive theory in writing to provide an alternative solution to the difficulties and problems in EFL writing classes.

**Literature Review**

The main interest of this literature review is to provide L2 teachers a new perspective for teaching writing. The sources for this literature review were found in various databases (Education Research Complete, EBSCOhost, Lobovault, ERIC, ProQuest, PRISMA, and JSTOR). These databases were consulted via the Zimmerman Library system at the University of New Mexico. Additional searches were made in internet websites such as Google Scholar to look for studies on this topic.

This literature review has an overview of the most important views and findings from 21 studies related to metacognition to teach L2 writing. This paper will follow two parameters. First, the chosen studies are about writing in EFL or ESL contexts since the main objective is to investigate metacognitive knowledge and metacognitive strategies in L2 writings to provide teachers more insights into this issue. Also, the body of research on the role of metacognition in L2 writing will focus on publications from 1986 to 2016 in order to provide a good number of studies related to L2 writing. This time range was chosen because in the “last three decades, researchers have attempted to prove that becoming metacognitive learners is beneficial not only in general learning but also in specific subject areas such as reading, writing, mathematics, social studies, and problem solving” (Xiao, 2007, p. 22). Seven studies investigate differences among poor and skilled L2 writers, and 14 studies address metacognitive instructions.

**Differences among successful and unsuccessful EFL writers.** Educators’ main purpose is to help students enhance their learning. One way to achieve this improvement could be finding the variables that are responsible for differences among successful and unsuccessful learners. Writing research has not been the exception because there are studies that have explored metacognitive awareness of EFL writers in order to uncover what it is that makes one student a skilled writer and another a poor one. This knowledge benefits teachers to improve the writing of weaker students.

For example, Kasper (1997) suggested that metacognitive growth of second language learners, apart from their ethnic, cultural, and linguistic
background, links with their writing performance. The statistical analysis indicated that skilled students showed a greater awareness of themselves as writers which helped them to have better writing, but poor students showed little awareness of themselves as writers which affected their performance when they write in L2 (p. 9). These findings are confirmed by Victori (1999), who identified metacognitive awareness as a factor that distinguishes poor from skilled EFL writers. His studies revealed that good writers focused on global text-level problems, such as writing coherently and evaluating them while poor writers mostly focused on vocabulary and grammatical aspects such as using the right tenses (p. 42).

Another study conducted by Angelova (2001) revealed that good and poor writers differ in their writing strategies because the good writers were better acquainted with concepts such as thesis statement, coherence, and cohesion. Unlike skilled writers, poor writers are not aware of a typical structure of a paragraph in English expository writing and prefer paragraphs with looser structure. Besides this, poor writers started writing without having any specific plan in mind and reported that their main goal was to write as much as possible. Similarly, Macaro (2005) with lower-intermediate writers found that the more (self-rated) effective writers were those that monitored and checked their work as they composed. These effective writers were more likely to check spelling, word order, and endings, and checked if what they wrote made sense. Also, they read their writing out loud to see if it sounded right and looked for mistakes that they made all the time (p. 243).

Differences between skilled and less skilled writers are also demonstrated in China by H. Wu (2008) who indicated that successful writers employ a wider variety of strategies than unsuccessful writers. Wu mentioned that skilled writers explored the depth of content; imitate the language in the text; use simple, pure and idiomatic language; and avoid Chinese English. While in Taiwan, in a study that employed think-aloud with video observations and interviews to investigate the strategies used for writing by 20 high and 20 low achievers, Chien (2012) found that high-achieving student writers were more aware of and focused more on formulating their position statement in planning, generating text, and revising and editing their text, such as changing the meaning and fixing grammatical and spelling errors during their review. In this study, the author employed think-aloud with video observations and interviews to investigate the strategies used for writing by these 20 high and 20 low achievers.

Raoofi, Chan, Mukundan, & Rashidan (2014) found that skilled student writers used more metacognitive strategies, such as presenting ideas in an organized way and revising than weak student writers. The researchers support Victori’s (1999) claim that students who were less skilled in writing mainly focused on the problems associated with vocabulary (such as translating words) and grammatical mistakes, while more skilled ones mentioned global writing problems associated with textual coherence. Victori said that the students with poor writing ability did not make reference to difficulties such as lack of relevant information (points and examples) to support their ideas and lack of ability in connecting ideas (p. 42).

**Metacognitive instruction.** There are also studies that show the effectiveness of some metacognitive instruction. An early study done by Charles (1990) claimed that self-monitoring techniques allow students to avoid any uncertainty about any part of their text while they have more control over the feedback they receive. Students can annotate with comments or queries on their problem areas, before handing in written assignments to the teacher, and the teacher responds in writing to these notes. Thus, students received direct responses to their queries and this technique encourages students “to look critically and analytically at their writing and to place themselves in the position of readers” (p. 289).

Graham, MacArthur, & Schwartz’s (1995) research suggests setting and revising goals to change students’ behavior and improvements in the overall
quality of students’ texts. Goal setting can be more effective if students are requested to add information. In the study, the participants had to add three things which helped to improve writing performances of children with writing and learning difficulties.

In another study, completed by Hongyun, (2008), the author demonstrated that implementation of instructional principles of metacognition in EFL writing in a formal classroom can enhance learners’ metacognitive awareness and produce obvious improvement in their writing performance. Some of these principles stressed the importance of helping students to have a better understanding of the purpose of writing, knowing about their strengths and weaknesses in the composition of their own and their peers, and being encouraged to write interesting and significant composition, etc. (p. 89).

An additional study developed by Wong & Storey (2006) proposes interactive and reflective activities using writing reflective journals and editing modes. The research showed that these activities can help the development of declarative knowledge (awareness of writing effectiveness) and procedural knowledge (writing performance). The participants were asked to reflect before and after writing in their journals to link what they knew about writing effectiveness (declarative knowledge) to what they had actually written (procedural knowledge). This study showed that this metacognitive instruction increased students’ writing performance.

Cotterall and Murray’s (2009) study suggests that students’ self-concept and metacognitive knowledge can be improved by exposure to a learning structure characterized by personal learning plans (PLPs), daily learning logs (DLLs), learning strategy guides, mini-lessons, peer interaction, and availability of the instructor. Also, the empirical study conducted by Lv & Chen (2010) indicated their writing approach training really had positive effects on students’ writing performances. This approach consisted of three components of metacognitive strategy (self-planning, self-monitoring, and self-evaluation) and the Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach (CALLA) training mode.

Likewise, Negretti and Kuteeva (2011) brought the concept of metacognitive knowledge together with the concept of genre awareness in their exploratory case study. This research showed that metacognition can be effective in the genre-based approach and suggests that the students made greater improvements in academic writing performance. Yen (2014) supported the previous study of Negretti & Kuteeva (2011) showing that the students were able to successfully apply genre knowledge to their writing. Xinghua (2010) identifies the factors of metacognition in English writing considering writing teaching and writing activity. Regarding the teaching activity, this study distinguishes some factors: motivation, learning environment, English proficiency of learners, metacognition is native language writing, and the score criteria in writing tests.

Ong (2014) researched the effects of planning time conditions (pre-task, extended pre-task, freewriting, and control) and task conditions (topic; topic and ideas; and topic, ideas, and macro-structure) on the frequencies of five metacognitive processes during planning and writing of 106 L2 writers at a Singapore university. Findings point out that the effects of task conditions were significant on the frequency of generation and organization of new ideas during planning, and on the frequency of elaboration and organization of new ideas during writing. However, the effects of planning time were significant only on the frequency of thinking of language aspects of the task during writing. This study recommends providing students the topic of the essay and the macro-structure for writing an argumentative genre. The macro-structure provided for the writers included these guidelines: 1) state your stand or viewpoint, 2) Support your arguments with reasons or examples or facts, 3) propose counter-arguments and refute them, and 4) restate or reinforce your stand.
Wei, Chenghiang, & Adawu (2014) also present the positive effects of strategy-based instruction (SBI) assisted by multimedia software into metacognitive planning. The research describes how L2 beginners integrate graphic organizers software into the prewriting process to help them generate and organize ideas during the prewriting process which is different from a traditional prewriting approach that uses only paper and pencil. With the software, students could use its embedded graphic organizers (e.g. concept maps and brainstorming webs) to express their ideas freely via the mapping feature (planning), as well as categorize their thoughts by grouping related information together (organizing). Also, Panahandeh & Asl (2014) present positive outcomes of their research that explored interrelationships between planning and monitoring skills as metacognitive strategies. In this study, the metacognitive instruction used a strategy that was composed of five stages based on CALLA model. This strategy used explicit and direct instruction with modeling and guided practice. The effects of this instruction were positive since students showed improvement in their writings.

Teng (2016) also showed the positive effects of a multi-dimensional method called IMPROVE and cooperative learning (COOP-META). Using this method, learners increase their writing achievement and metacognitive awareness while they developed the capacity for self-regulation through social interaction.

Implications of the Instruction

Helping students to become competent L2 writers is one of the main objectives of EFL/ESL teachers. Therefore, this research has important implications for teaching and learning L2 writing. This review could help teachers to be aware of practices, instructions, approaches, strategies, and techniques used to teach metacognitive strategies in EFL writing classes. Also, it can develop learners’ writing metacognition through pedagogical interventions because teachers can make students be involved in activities and process-based lessons that could lead them to develop their metacognitive knowledge and metacognitive strategies in L2 writing.

Teachers can raise students’ awareness about themselves and the tasks and strategies they use to write in English (metacognitive knowledge), and be empowered with metacognitive strategies to plan, monitor, and evaluate their writings (metacognitive strategies). This knowledge could be more useful if students are guided to reflect and regulate the effectiveness of the strategies. To conclude, implementing metacognitive awareness can be an effective solution for improving L2 writing.

References


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Explicating the Present Perfect Tense: Controlling a Complex Grammatical Form Necessary for Accurate Report Writing Among Criminal Justice and Medical Careers Students

Jim Sayers

The three most common verb tenses used in English academic writing, according to the popular Walden writing website, are the present, the past, and the present perfect (Walden.edu). The present perfect tense (PPT) occurs on average four times per 1,000 words in academic writing, and this average has been approximately duplicated in several studies (Schluter, 2006). Deeper recognition of the PPT’s importance in accurate academic and work-related writing and its simultaneous complexity suggest benefit in singling this verb tense out for direct instruction, particularly among community college students enrolled in criminal justice-related majors or majors within the allied health careers.

In terms of PPT importance, proficiency in the PPT predicts familiarity with irregular verb forms and substantial past tense knowledge. Proficiency in irregular verb forms and past tense usage will be expected values in any written portion of gatekeeper tests within these career paths, and errors are frequently counted off an overall score.

Even more importantly, the PPT’s essential role in conveying subtle time relationships and event sequences in report writing and comprehension can and should be emphasized to students entering the allied health and criminal justice careers, which place high demands on precision. Employability and success in these career areas, and the avoidance of potentially catastrophic communication failure, often depend on the ability to express and comprehend event sequences accurately. Examples of these demands can readily be drawn from texts in these curricular areas.

For many students seeking two-year degrees or certificates in New Mexico, acquiring the PPT is related to three issues. The first issue is related to how PPT meanings are often conveyed in informal, everyday speech. The second issue is the somewhat complicated structure and meanings of the PPT. A third issue is related to how this tense is often presented in instruction.

The specific time relationship meanings formally signaled by the PPT can be conveyed in contextually-supported, non-standard, and informal English speech without correct use of the PPT. Speakers of regional or informal dialects in New Mexico and elsewhere can and use the simple past, or partial use of past participle for PPT meaning, e.g. *I been living here for eight years. r *I lived here for eight years. This informal usage can include erroneous or random mixing of irregular verbs forms in informal conversation that can move into student writing, e.g. *I have spoke to him. Thus dialect issues sensitive to students may attach to teaching and acquiring the PPT.
Additionally, PPT structure and meanings contain inherent complexity absent from other English tenses. The auxiliary verb *to have* is a present tense irregular verb that must agree with the subject, a notorious source of student writing errors, and the ninety or so past participles of irregular English verbs follow no overall rule. Thus students may make more than one error in constructing the PPT, with each error a separate issue.

Aside from these mechanical challenges, the PPT is further complicated by its several meanings.

The first and most commonly described meaning of the PPT is to indicate continuing action; action that has been begun in the past and continues to the present. i.e. She has taken that medication for three years.

As most texts point out, this usage is commonly signaled by *for* as in for three years or *since* as in since I moved here.

A second meaning of the PPT is to indicate recent action: i.e. I have just now understood his purpose. Or, less common, they have recently changed residence.

The PPT used for recent action is further confused for many students by the ambiguity associated with the signal word *just*, which can mean *recently* as in the example above as well as *only*, as in there was just one left. Further confusing matters, *just* is now commonly used with little or no meaning as filler in informal speech.

A third meaning of the PPT is the indefinite past: i.e. I have taken his Psychology class, and it was really hard.

Apart from the above issues, a third issue for students in acquiring the PPT may exist with regard to a lack of emphasis on the PPT, which may affect instruction. For example, *Grassroots with Readings, 10th Edition*, a widely used remedial writing text, dedicates a single page to explanation of the PPT, although it does provide several pages of practices. *Grassroots* doesn’t mention the indefinite PPT (Fawcett, 2010).

Despite the frequent afterthought characterization of indefinite past, corpus studies show it to be the most common use of the PPT in academic writing (Schluter, 2006). The common slang phrase, *Been there, done that*, shortened or corrupted from I have been there and I have done that, is an example of this usage easily recognized by students. It may be helpful in instruction, therefore, to provide a more descriptive designation to the indefinite past, such as declaration of accomplishment, since this is in fact how it is most often used.

According to the New Mexico Department of Higher Education (http://www.hed.state.nm.us) nearly half of all New Mexican community college students took at least one remedial course in the Fall semester of 2015. Such students may be considered most likely to benefit from direct PPT instruction.

Even so, a recommendation for directly teaching the PPT should not be construed as advocacy for grammar-based English instruction.
generally. As much as possible, all grammar instruction among adult learners should be embedded in a context of academic reading and writing relevant to adult students and to individual and collective empowerment. Since many of the jobs in community college career areas require approximately 60 semester credit hours for the relevant degree or certificate, it seems reasonable to recommend that instructors target the PPT to most efficiently use limited instructional contact to benefit student success.

References


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