

Crosschecked problems in undergraduate academic writing

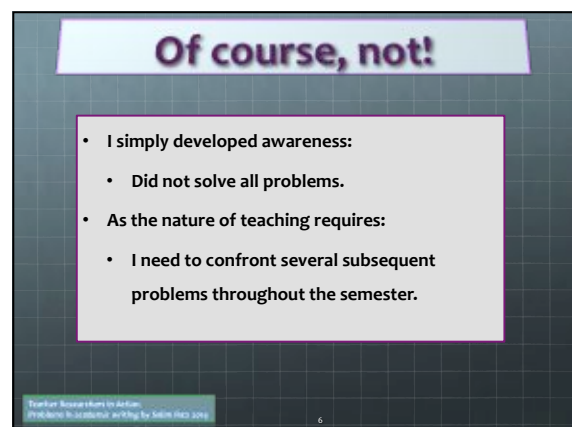
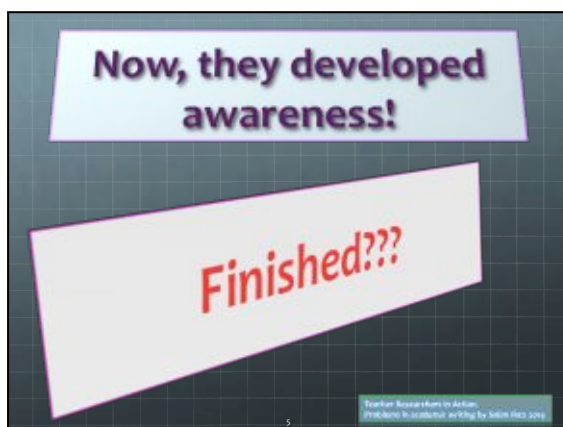
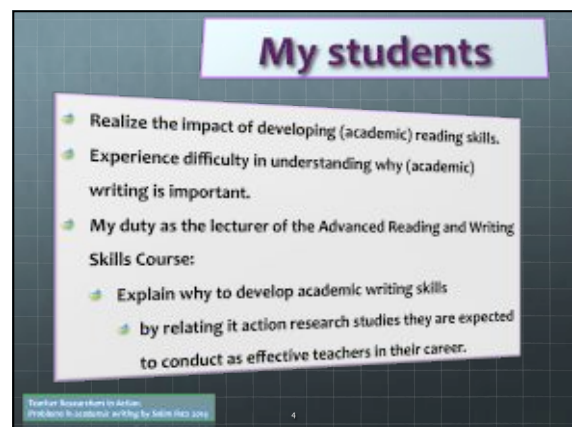
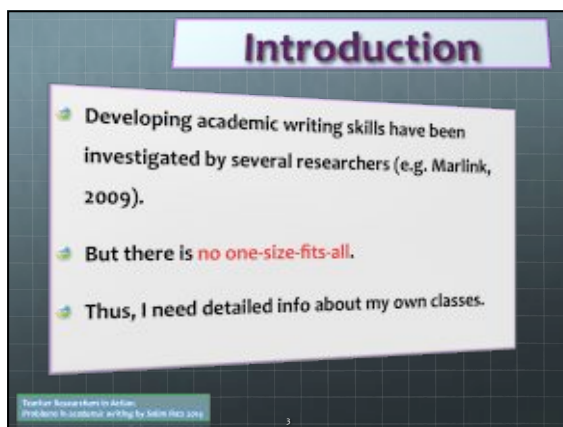
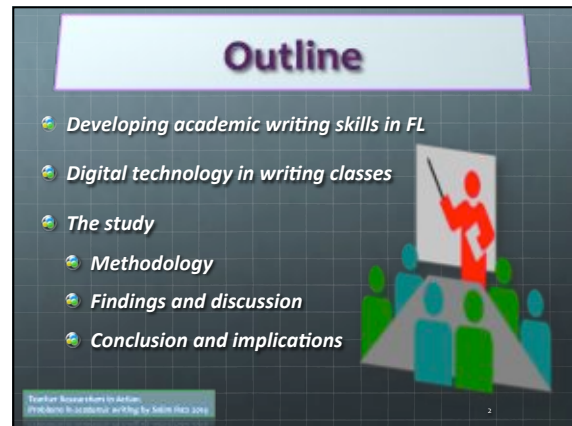
Salim Razi


Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University

Abstract

I investigated the difficulties that my students encountered in academic writing in Advanced Reading and Writing Skills Course at ELT department of Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University in 2011-2012 academic year by means of the *Inventory of Academic Writing*. They indicated their problems were mainly related to *paraphrasing* and *quoting* however they disregarded some of their essential problems such as deciding whether *citation is needed or not*. I crosschecked the problems they identified with the items in *Transparent Academic Writing Rubric (TAWR)* that I developed to score their papers. In the light of the findings, I revised the syllabus and for 2012-2013 academic year, added a new component to familiarize them with the items in TAWR. I modelled how to score papers by working on several samples from previous years in the classroom and asked them to score their own papers. Finally, I administered an anonymous peer review process. Each student reviewed a blinded assignment and scored it by using TAWR. I compared their scores with my scores and this had an impact on their course scores. The overall indication of this study highlights that we, as language teachers, should analyse our students' needs and arrange our teaching plans accordingly.

Key words: action research, academic writing problems, assessing academic writing, Turnitin, anonymous peer review






Digital technology in writing classes

- Incorporate digital technology into writing classes:
 - To check student papers against plagiarism.
 - To provide more effective feedback.
- Create a virtual class Turnitin and welcome online assignment submissions.

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Features

Originality

GradeMark

PeerMark

Originality

GradeMark

PeerMark


Originality

GradeMark

PeerMark

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2010 report

- 21 independent studies.
- Scientific basis** of their services by highlighting the results of research studies on pedagogy and practice in writing.
- The overall conclusions:**
 - teachers should integrate process writing, pay attention to originality, provide formative feedback, benefit from peer review, appreciate the contribution of writing on learning in the content areas, and impose technology to enhance writing.

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2012 report

- 39 independently published studies on the impact of Turnitin services.
- A consensus:**
 - Turnitin is an effective tool in the prevention and detection of plagiarism.

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2014 report

- Evidence on Turnitin's educational gains:**

"by encouraging students to become more original writers, facilitating electronic submission and helping instructors reduce the amount of time spent grading, while increasing the quality of feedback they give and the level of student engagement" (p. 9).

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THE STUDY

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The main aim

- Identifying the problems that freshmen encounter in writing their academic papers.

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Methodology

- RQ1: What are the self-reported difficulties that freshmen encounter in academic writing?
- RQ2: What are the lecturer-reported difficulties that freshmen encounter in academic writing?
- RQ3: What are the most commonly employed self-reported strategies to overcome academic writing problems?
- RQ4: Are the difficulties, reported strategies and scores different with regards to academic years?

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Setting

- Turkey:
 - Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart University
 - ELT Department
- 2 consecutive academic years:
 - 2011-2012 & 2012-2013
 - Spring semester



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Participants

| Day / Evening | Gender | 2011-2012 | 2012-2013 | Total |
|---------------|--------|-----------|-----------|-------|
| Day | Female | 29 | 40 | 69 |
| | Male | 11 | 17 | 28 |
| Evening | Female | 33 | 24 | 57 |
| | Male | 16 | 6 | 22 |
| Repeating | Female | 61 | - | 61 |
| | Male | 35 | - | 35 |
| Total | | 185 | 87 | 272 |

Excluded students who did not submit papers!

Age: from 17 to 35; Age mean = 21

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INSTRUMENTS

- Academic Writing Difficulty and Strategy Inventory
- $\alpha = .90$
- 42 items in 2 groups:
 - Difficulties (33 items),
 - Strategies (9 items)

- Transparent Academic Writing Rubric (Razi, 2013)

- $\alpha = .89$
- intra-rater reliability
 - [Pearson's $r(55) = .99, p < .001$]
- inter-rater reliability
 - [Pearson's $r(55) = .97, p < .001$]
- 50 items in 5 groups:
 - introduction (8 items),
 - citation (16 items),
 - academic writing (8 items),
 - idea presentation (11 items),
 - mechanics (7 items).

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PROCEDURES OF DATA COLLECTION

Advanced Reading and Writing Course Contents suggested by Razi (2011).



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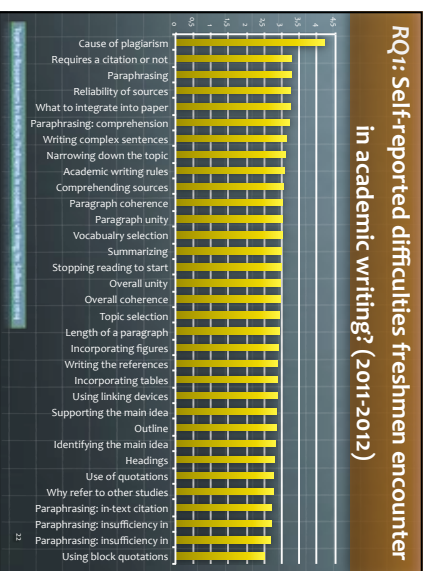
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Limitation

Generalization:
Data from a single university in the Turkish tertiary context.

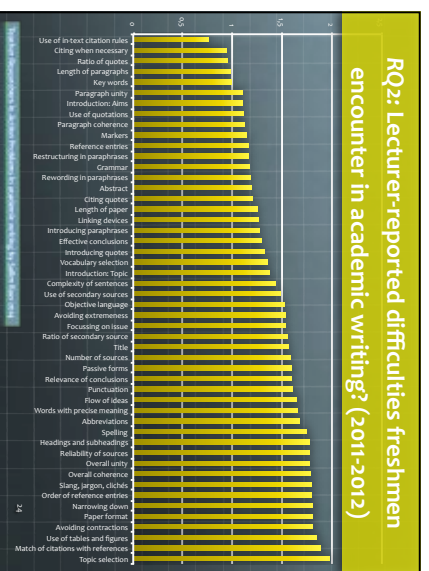
Findings



STEPS OF PRE SCREENING

Turnitin reports were used:

- The length
- The quotation ratio
- Similarity reports



RQ4: Differences in difficulty, strategy and score?

| Difficulty | | | | | | |
|------------|-----|-----------|-----|-----|-------|------|
| Year | N | \bar{X} | SD | df | t | p |
| 2011-2012 | 185 | 2.99 | .60 | 270 | 2.741 | .007 |
| 2012-2013 | 87 | 2.78 | .57 | | | |

| Strategy | | | | | | |
|-----------|-----|-----------|-----|-----|-------|-----|
| Strategy | N | \bar{X} | SD | df | t | p |
| 2011-2012 | 185 | 4.12 | .67 | 270 | -1.50 | .14 |
| 2012-2013 | 87 | 4.25 | .59 | | | |

| Score | | | | | | |
|-----------|-----|-----------|-------|-----|------|------|
| Score | N | \bar{X} | SD | df | t | p |
| 2011-2012 | 161 | 71.96 | 13.81 | 248 | 6.92 | .000 |
| 2012-2013 | 89 | 84.02 | 12.01 | | | |

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Discussion

- Classroom-based assessment (Lam, 2013):
 - A combination of self, peer and tutor review.
- Feedback develops learner autonomy (Hu & Lam, 2010).
- Provide feedback from multiple sources.
 - Develop metacognitive writing strategies to reflect, criticize, and redraft their own papers (Lam, 2013).
- Such strategies support learner autonomy:
 - Essential by university students (Humphreys & Wyatt, 2013).
- Autonomy is culture specific (Humphreys & Wyatt, 2013):
 - Turkey, students are centred on dependence before university.
 - Encouragement of learner autonomy is rather essential.
- The Zone of Proximal Development (Vygotsky, 1978):
 - Identifies the contribution of interaction and collaboration.
 - A peer provides awareness on the problems in a paper:
 - The other peer comes to a new stage of development (Ruecker, 2010).

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Conclusion 1

Identifying academic writing difficulties is a challenging task for freshmen.

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Conclusion 2

To overcome academic writing difficulties, freshmen employ strategies at a high level.

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Conclusion 3

Familiarization with the rubric seems to be beneficial for the development of better academic writing skills.

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Educational implications

- Students are not aware of their real problems.
- They need to develop learner autonomy.
- They need to develop metacognitive skills of monitoring and evaluating.

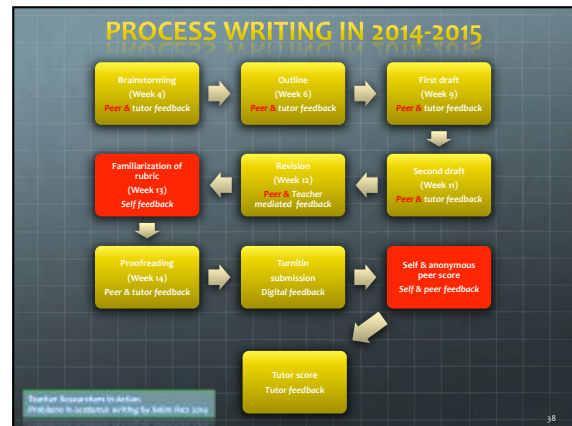
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Implications: Further research

- Series on-going research:
- See Razi (2014) for the impact of anonymous peer review on developing academic writing skills.
- Further research:
 - Interview students:
 - Learn the contribution of familiarization with the rubric.
 - Learn the contribution of several types of feedback:
 - Self, peer, lecturer, and **digital** (Razi, 2014).
 - Administer peer review for every step of process writing on Turnitin.
 - Investigate the employment of strategies more carefully.

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