



UiT The Arctic University of Norway

Nourishing learner autonomy in English academic writing

Second Language Learning and Teaching (SLLT)

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Some challenges for beginner university students in Norway

A teacher in geology critically evaluates the beginner students' academic preparedness

“It appears that those students, coming directly from upper-secondary school, have learnt to reproduce knowledge, but they have neither learnt to use or to retrieve knowledge on their own or being critical to knowledge . . . They remember, and they just repeat what they have read. They have not critical thoughts that we expect at university. They are completely unprepared.” (Wollcheid et al. 2020, p. 29)

1. Low academic working skills, critical thinking and learner autonomy (Lødding and Aamodt 2015, Wollcheid et al. 2020)
2. Norwegian high school students show low writing skills in English L2 academic writing
 - argumentation, reference techniques, structuring texts and formal language (Horverak 2018, Munkejord 2021)
3. Traditional lecture doesn't work well (e.g. Rynning 2014)

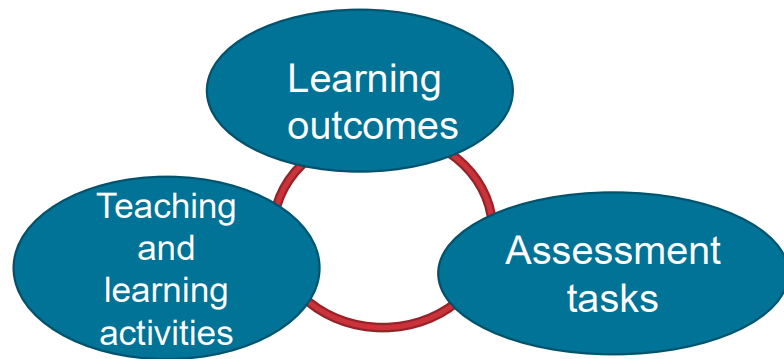
Goal

Enhance beginner students' academic working skills, focusing on learner autonomy, and academic writing skills in English through formative peer assessment (FPA)



Theoretical background

Biggs (1999) “Constructive Alignment”
Cf. Wang et al., (2012) CA promotes
more deep learning approaches.



An autonomous learner: responsible for all aspects of the learning process (Holec 1981, Murray, 2014)

- 1) setting goals
- 2) selecting materials
- 3) Implement activities and strategies
- 4) monitoring progress
- 5) assessing outcomes

FPA enhances learning autonomy (Topping 1998, 2009, Carnell 2016) and self-regulatory skills (Butler and Winnie 1995, Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick, 2006)

FPA gives positive effects on students' writing (Min, 2005, Lundstrom & Baker, 2009, etc.)

1. Does FPA in English writing lessons help enhance the learning autonomy of Norwegian students in the preparatory course?
2. What are the students' perceptions of their achievement of learning outcomes after completing FPA? Which specific learning outcomes do they believe they have attained?

Case study

FPA in English essay writing lessons

- Types of learning activities: English argumentative essay writing in a preparatory course
- 25 students, 2,5 weeks, spring 2022
- Intended learning outcomes: grammar, structure, academic language, audience-awareness, argumentation and reference technique.
- 2 rounds of FPA activities with formative peer and self assessment, peer feedback, peer and self revision

Round 1 “FPA training with sample essays”

- 1) Make assessment criteria
- 2) Peer assessment/feedback with a response sheet and an annotation tool
- 3) Peer revision of the sample essay
- 4) Peer assessment of revisions with a response sheet

Round 2 “Write an argumentative essay and FPA”

- 1) Make assessment criteria
- 2) Self-assessment with a response sheet
- 3) Peer assessment/feedback with a response sheet
- 4) Peer revision with an annotation tool
- 5) Self-revision

Evaluation of _____

Total evaluation Fair | Average | Above Average | Exceptionally Good?

	Questions	Evaluator's assessment
1.	What does the writer do well in this assignment? List one or more aspects.	I like _____ because _____
2.	What part(s) of the essay were a bit confusing or unclear? Give specific suggestions you have for revising the unclear parts of this writing.	_____ is a bit confusing because _____ I recommend you to _____
3.	How do you evaluate introduction? Is the essay question restated in own words? Is the thesis statement clearly stated?	
4.	How do you evaluate the writer's argumentation for his/her main idea of the essay? Are claims supported with clear reasons, specific examples and/or relevant evidence?	The argumentation is good because _____ Or I think your argumentation will be more persuasive if you _____
5.	How is the writer's use of references? Does the writer use credible sources to support his/her ideas?	
6.	How do you evaluate the conclusion? Does the conclusion answer the essay question? Does it readdress the thesis statement in light of the evidence provided in the body part?	
7.	Does the essay have a good structure? State why.	The essay has a good structure because _____ Or The essay will have a better structure if you _____
8.	Are paragraphs good? Does each paragraph have only one main idea? Does each paragraph start with a good topic sentence?	Paragraphs are good because _____ Or Paragraphs will be better if you _____
9.	Are grammar and spelling correct? If not, give examples from the paper.	
10.	Is the language in the paper academic? If you find examples of non-academic wording in the paper, state them. <u>E.g.</u> phrasal verbs, contractions, colloquial words, vague words, etc.	

Peer assessment/feedback with response sheet

- Questions based on the assessment criteria that students made.
- Questions concerning structure, argumentation, reference technique, grammar, academic language and audience awareness.
- Questions intended to help monitor/evaluate students' learning progress.

Peer feedback: annotations with *Hypothes.is*

Text A

The message from the poem, was that a worker did a task that was risky for his life. The story teller saw him do it, did not stop him or warn him head and choose to look the other way. He elaborates on how he could have prevented his coworker's death, from doing the task without following rules. He has a lot of guilt for not trying to save or speaking up to his coworker. If only he gave him a warning from the danger he was in, he could have saved his coworker's life. The message from the poem is that don't follow the same path. If you see someone in danger warn them and let them know. So you should try to prevent it. Don't look the other way like the poem explained, cuz you will regret and feel guilty for not doing so. The poem is saying to be aware of your workings. The work can affect other people's life and their family in a major way. Not only that, It can also affect the observer. So you should follow working safety rules and if coworkers break them, make sure to let them know.

Text B

I chose to look the other way

The message of the poem is that the writer looked the other way when a coworker ignored a safety rule. Which ended in tragedy, in this text we can see and discuss how this poem is relevant to an engineer working with technology.

In this poem Don Merrill writes that he could have saved a life that day but didn't because he didn't want to argue with a colleague about a safety rule himself had once ignored. What Merrill didn't know was that ignoring this safety rule would end in tragedy this time, and his coworker died because of it. the writer now feels guilty as if he let his colleague die by not stopping them. The writer's message in this poem is to not look the other way when someone risks their life.

This poem is relevant to a technical engineer's regular workday. An engineer will often work in production industries or in the building industry such as these there are countless safety hazards, and one should always follow protocol to reduce as many injuries and fatalities as possible. They are made for a reason even though they often feel unnecessary and annoying, but the fact is without them there would be a lot more injuries and deaths in the industry.

As an engineer working with technology there will often be electricity involved. When this is the case one should always be extra careful and always follow safety protocols, because if you don't you might end up getting injured without realizing what even happened. Electricity is invisible and undetectable.

Very unprofessional colloquial expression. Do not use this in a paper.



Student

Feb 9, 2022

English poem

The poem is saying to an engineer, be aware of your workings.

Answer to Q2

Show replies (1)



Student

Feb 9, 2022

English poem

The poem is saying to an engineer, be aware of your workings.

refrace the sentence. It would have been better to write. The poem is relevant to a engineer because it says no matter wich task you are performing the safety comes first.



Student

Feb 9, 2022

English poem

The poem is saying to an engineer, be aware of your workings.

Peer revision with annotations

Some people think that some types of criminals should not go to prison. Instead, they should do unpaid work in the community. To what extent do you agree?

Should criminals do unpaid work for the community?

Many believe that some criminals should not go to prison, and that community service would be a better suited punishment for them. Criminals have many different reasons for committing their criminal offences. For those who have committed lesser crimes, it might be more acceptable to include them in the community via unpaid labor. If not handled correctly, this could result in possible disadvantages for civilians. To an extent, I do believe that certain criminals should be sentenced to community service, while others should not. In this essay I will be discussing different viewpoints regarding criminals and community service.

First and foremost, it is widely known that people commit crime for many different reasons. For instance, some crimes can be because rooted in poverty or debilitating mental health. For this reason, it is best to differentiate between prisoners based on motive. In this way the judicial system can evaluate to which degree each criminal could be harmful or helpful to any given community. Using this information correctly to decide who should be eligible for community service or not, can make the people sure that their sentencing does not threaten the life and safety of other civilians.



Student



Changes done to the entire text: Edited font to Times New Roman, size 12, spacing 1.5. Removed some unnecessary spacing.

@mention or reply

Student



Changed the structure of the paragraph and corrected grammatical errors. Removed some repetition and clarified thesis statement and intentions.

@mention or reply

Student



Switched out subjective wording like "we" for more objective terms. Clarified the intent of the paragraph and changed grammatical structure.

@mention or reply

Student



Changed the start of the paragraph to reflect what is stated in it. Changed grammatical structure to clarify the writer's intent. Changed language to be more objective and

@mention or reply

Student questionnaire

- Anonymous online questionnaire after round 2 last spring.
- 20 questions that ask about
 - Students' belief and experiences with FPA as a learning method
 - the perceived impact of FPA on their learning and goal achievement
- 12 open questions.
- 12 out of 25 students answered. 48%
- Analysis of some students' feedback in addition.

Results and discussion

RQ2) What are the students' perceptions of their achievement of the learning outcomes after completing FPA? Which specific learning outcomes do they believe they have attained?

1) Have students learnt from FPA?

a) All answered that they've learned from the entire FPA activities.

"Got a better understanding of how to write a good essay."

b) 83% perceived that they've improved their writing skills b.o. peer assessment and peer revision.

- 8,3 % "maybe"

- 8,3 % "no" but said peer assessment and peer revision were positive

"It gave me good ideas how to write a good text" "Learned what you can make difference" "(learned) Writing good english and how you build up a sentence"

2) Which intended learning outcomes? Perceived learning effects in

- **Grammar**

- **Academic language**

- **Reference technique**

- **Audience-awareness**

- *"Better grammar and language understanding."*

- *"I learned about avoiding the get passive in formal text"*

- *"Easier to see the difference between formal and informal English."*

- *"references"*

- *"(I could use my knowledge from FPA to) (m)ake the text easier to read."*

- But students did not mention

- Structure

- Argumentation

Results and discussion

RQ2) What are the students' perceptions of their achievement of the learning outcomes after completing FPA? Which specific learning outcomes do they believe they have attained?

Does it mean that they learned nothing i.t.o. structure and argumentation after FPA?

- Analysis of peer feedback and peer revision
- a) Structure
 - Constructive feedbacks imply students' enhanced knowledge about structure and dispositioning

A student feedback to peer's draft: *"The introduction is a bit confusing because the thesis statement does not say if you agree or not. I recommend you to write your opinion in the start because it sets the readers expectations of the main part"*

- b) Argumentation
 - Almost all feedbacks from the response sheets concern whether the claims are supported by credible sources.
 - Fewer revision suggestions.
 - Closed, biased question?
 - Limitation of FPA? (cf. Villamil & de Guerrero, 1998).

Student 1

Filled out the conclusion to better reflect the statements made in the body of the text.
Changed wording to better relate to the thesis question and statement.
Changed grammatical structure and wording to make the language more academic.

March 01, 2022, 13:09

Student 2

Changed the structure of the paragraph and corrected grammatical errors. Removed some repetition and clarified thesis statement and intentions.

March 01, 2022, 12:54

4. How do you evaluate the writer's argumentation for his/her main idea of the essay?

Are claims supported with clear reasons, specific examples and/or relevant evidence?

The argumentation is good because most of the arguments seem reasonable and are backed up by credible sources.

Student 3

Results and discussion

RQ1. Does FPA in English writing lessons help enhance learning autonomy of students in preliminary course?

1) Positive experience and attitude towards FPA

- the overall experience: 91,7 % positive, 8,3 % negative.
- the experience of peer-assess and peer-revise: 91,7 % positive, 8,3 % negative.
- Many want to use peer revision (58%) and peer assessment (41%) as learning activities in future.
 - *“I think it (my knowledge and experience from FPA) will be useful when taking a bachelor, and also when we are working as engi(n)eers”*
- → Enhance motivation for learning

2) Develop strategy for better writing

- *“(FPA activities were) Positive, because I could see how my Peers did the essay, and take out some pointers of the essay and put it in mine to improve and make it better.”*
- *“(The process of reading and assessing peers' text) (g)ave me an opportunity to see how other people write essays and take notes on what I could do better in my own essay.”*
- Enhance critical thinking and transferrable knowledge (cf. Topping et al 2009; Carnell, 2016)
- → Implement effective learning strategy

Results and discussion

3) More aware of their goal progress in writing

- *“(FPA was positive because) (t)he task reminded me what parts of my written texts I need to focus on improving. Finding and correcting the mistakes of others reminded me what mistakes are common, and that I should look out for them.”*
- *“I learned a lot from it in terms of my own writing, and grew conscious to common mistakes that I might make.”*
- *“The processes of revising the text was positive because it is a chore to do, and I need more practice in it.”*
- → **increased self-monitoring and assessment** (cf. Villamil and De Guerrero 1998, Lynch et al, 2012)

4) The majority believe that they can write a better text in English after FPA.

- → **maintain a sense of self-efficacy**

- These correspond to the characteristics of **an autonomous learner**

Conclusion

- 1) FPA in English essay writing lessons may help enhance students' learner autonomy**
 - (cf. Butler and Winnie 1995, Topping 1998, 2009, Nicol and Macfarlane-Dick, 2006, etc.)
 - May enhance critical thinking, effective learning strategy and self-monitoring
 - May promote self-efficacy and motivation to learn.

- 2) It may enhance writing performance in English argumentative essay**
 - Achieved a deeper understanding of the subject
 - 5 out of 6 intended learning outcomes are perceived to be developed.

- FPA may help preparatory course students prepare for the higher educational studies.

- 3) Further study**
 - Why less frequent feedback on “argumentation”?
 - Analysis of the final drafts to validate students' self-reported learning outcomes and assessment of the impact of FPA on the quality of their revisions.

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