

A Needed Comprehensive College Writing Program

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ABSTRACT—*A college writing program of five mutually dependent stages is suggested to be an integral component of the requirements of the first two years of English undergraduate programs at Jordanian universities. The goals are: to compensate for the lack of writing instruction in school education; to make all levels of writing feel possible for students to use for academic, personal and practical purposes; to make the act of writing productive, meeting desired academic goals and quality. A framework for the design and contents of these stages/courses is provided.*

Keywords—academic writing-Jordan, expressivist approach, the cultural project, Composition Studies, advanced writing, research, creative writing

1. INTRODUCTION AND RATIONALIZATION

Teaching writing in Jordan—where English is a foreign language—still needs a lot of attention. Most of the students we meet in our college writing classes have received little instruction on how to write. I have been teaching writing for several years to university students who come from all parts of the country. Every semester I ask my students—in our first meeting—to write about their previous experience with writing in both languages Arabic and English. Many students assert that they were not asked to do much writing in their school years. They say that teachers often skipped writing exercises and focused on the reading and grammar parts. Some students report that they were asked to write in exams to fulfill grade requirements with no prior training or any specific instruction. Some say that teachers of Arabic asked them to write more often than teachers of English, but even in Arabic, writing was neither a regular nor a meaningful practice. The task was almost always given as homework assignment, and several students would ask other people to help them do it. Few students say that they were actually required to do some writing in English—like once or twice a semester. Rarely, I get a student or two who would tell of regular writing practices. With this lack of experience in writing, many students go about their first writing tasks with no specific direction or clear strategies in their minds. They produce texts that only present generalizations often heard about the topic.

The field of Composition Studies, developed in the last few decades in the West, is mainly concerned with the teaching of writing to college and university students. It has experienced three major periods of composition theory and pedagogy. In the sixties, the field was controlled by what compositionists came to call "current-traditional rhetoric" (Berlin, 1987). Concerned with writing as a *product*, teaching practices focused on forms (modes of discourse) and language correctness. In the seventies, the field developed two intertwined strands, namely the expressivist and the cognitive schools—both concerned with writing as a *process* not just a *product*. While the expressivists focused on the fact that writing is a representation of the writer's self as expressed in the text, the cognitivists were more concerned with understanding the mental and psychological processes a writer goes through while producing a text. Then, and by the mid-eighties, the field was moving rapidly towards social theories and formed what is now known as the social/cultural paradigm (or the cultural project). This third approach views students-writers as social constructs, cultural critics, and agents of change. These theories and pedagogies are still striving to shape the teaching of writing. (See Faigley 1986, Berlin 1987, North 1987, Bizzell & Hertzberg 1990, and Rogers 2011.)

English departments in Jordanian universities are almost unaware of the scholarship that has been developing in Composition Studies for the past four decades in the West. It is true that most of this scholarship is concerned with and directed to students who are native speakers of English. Still, a brand of research has also been developing in the field that is concerned with the teaching of ESL/EFL writing and the writing practices of ESL/EFL students. This research builds mostly on the same theories and pedagogy ventured for teaching writing to native speakers. Many studies have compared and contrasted texts produced by native English speaking (NES) students and ESL/EFL students in different situations and for different reasons. Studies invariably found that the texts produced by non-native writers were "less effective than those of their NES peers" (see Silva, 1997: 210). In their attempt to explain causes for these differences, some studies have referred the differences to certain supposed cultural norms or patterns of thought. I haven't come

across any study that tried to find out or even suggest or hint at how previous schooling may have affected students' writing practices and the written texts they produced.

With the background I get from my students, I find enough reason to disagree and claim that the lack of schooling in writing strategies in general, and in methods of developing thoughts in particular, must be the core reason why the texts of non-native speakers of English differ so much from the texts produced by native speakers. Native English speaking students have been taught in school year after year how to develop written discourse in well-structured paragraphs and essays. Students in our college and university classes, then, need to be initiated to the art and process of writing as if they were still in grade school.

Are directors and planners of English Programs in Jordanian universities aware of this fact? Do they try to help students develop proper writing strategies? All English Programs in Jordanian Universities have required writing course(s). Invariably, a textbook, which is written for students different in background and purpose from ours, is used. The writing classes turn with many instructors into either a reading or a grammar practice with minimum writing requirements—depending on the content of the textbook used. If writing assignments are required more often, topics are usually either strange to our students and culture, or general topics that students have no firsthand experience with. I don't know of any department in which students are systematically introduced in these required writing courses to ways and methods of thought and text development.

To make up for this great deficiency in schooling, it is not enough to require students to finish one or more writing course(s). I propose that English departments in Jordanian universities need to build effective writing programs as an integral part of their undergraduate English programs. Such a program must build on the rich scholarship that has been accumulating in Composition Studies as developed in the West over the past few decades. In this paper, I suggest that departments need to make sure that students enroll in a set of four to five advanced writing courses. These courses must be carefully designed to cover different academic styles, forms, and purposes starting from paragraph development and moving through essays and longer texts towards authentic and meaningful research projects. The following sections outline proposed frames and contents for five courses which are presented as stages in the process of building students' writing experience.

2. STAGE ONE: PARAGRAPH DEVELOPMENT COURSE

The first stage of this suggested and urgently needed writing program is based on what has been called in Composition Studies "current traditional rhetoric" (see Berlin, 1987). In this approach, **modes of academic discourse** (including narration, description, cause-effect, comparison-contrast, argument, illustration, process-analysis, and classification) are introduced. These natural ways of expressing ideas have been known since the nineteenth century as methods of **Paragraph Development**. It is essential to acknowledge here the debate that has been going on for over two hundred years (Connors, 1981) over whether we should teach these modes in a formal class setting. Much recent composition scholarship actually works against limiting the teaching of writing in university to these modes. This approach has been criticized for it is being prescriptive in its assumptions. The main concern of the scholars who argue against teaching the modes is that focusing on superficial language correctness and arrangement (use of the modes) leads to ignoring Aristotelian invention (see Berlin, 1987 and Rogers, 2011).

Despite these objections, it is highly recommended to teach modes in a first-year writing class as students need some grounding in them—not for the modes themselves, but for the help they could give in achieving good thought-development and effective self-expression. Teaching the modes can accomplish several goals and objectives. First, modes teach students to express their thoughts clearly. Second, the modes will help students pay attention to coherence, cohesion, unity and clarity of ideas naturally without having to formally learn these terms. Third, modes present a basic organizational strategy to handle a subject. Fourth, modes assure both teachers and students that what they write actually makes good sense to their readers and fulfills a clear purpose. Above all, modes of discourse help students see that writing can be done following systematic methods of developing thoughts in a text.

It is useful to observe the division often used by grouping modes into three general classes. First, the NARRATIVE/ DESCRIPTIVE modes can be introduced. These sharpen students' senses and awareness of life matters and events and lead students to think more logically about the functions of writing. Students also start to realize the importance of audience as they try to make sense to readers. Narration and description also help students later to develop their explanatory, expository use of writing. After narration and description, class attention and work should turn to EXPOSITORY WRITING (including definition, comparison-contrast, cause-effect, illustration, process analysis, and classification paragraphs). Students are often asked to use these modes when answering our exam questions in literature and linguistics as well as in other courses. And they are what most students will be asked to do in their real-life jobs after they graduate. Finally class work is focused on PERSUASIVE WRITING or what is called the argument paragraph. Students need to be trained when writing arguments on formulating a specific and detailed personal stand supported by logical evidence to lead smoothly to a desired, sound conclusion.

Modes of discourse are needed at this stage because they help students to recognize and practice the different purposes and goals of writing. Many students write in too general terms, representing ideas that are related to no one, no time, or no place. Students themselves often feel their written discourse to be “a big, bland, tasteless nothing” (Kim Blanks, 2012). Such awkward, empty writing may explain why most of our students do not like writing classes, and think the texts they write to be useless. They find themselves neither in these classes nor in their own texts. Yes, our students need to be told that writing is done in the first place in order to reach an audience to whom we intend to get a message in a certain way to achieve some certain effect/purpose. (The teacher of writing must be aware of the literature that has been piling in the field related to *audience awareness*.) The intended purpose usually determines which mode of writing to employ. From this point, the teacher of this class needs to pay attention to the kind of topics students are asked to write on. Adopting basic assumptions from the expressive and cognitive approaches, the teacher will realize the importance of helping students to develop personal connections with what they write.

If students are expected to provide details and to have an intended purpose to achieve, they need to have full knowledge of the topics they are tackling in order to be able to form clear personal stands on them. And our eighteen/nineteen-year-old students know nothing better than their own lives. So, to help students master the modes of discourse and use them efficiently when conveying ideas and working to achieve needed effects, the topics assigned couldn't be better than students' own life experiences and situations. As the semester starts with narration followed by description, it becomes easy to point out the value of students' personal involvement in the topics they write. These two modes help them make themselves, their life events and what is important to them the focus of their writing. Narration and description also help students make the ideas they produce in the written text their own and encourage their awareness of the importance of voice and point of view in writing.

If students are made to tell stories of things that happened to them, they will start to feel a connection between what they learn in classes and their own lives as ideas start to have meaning to them. Imagining events or telling things that were told by others must be rejected. The teacher might meet some resentment and resistance for two reasons. One is that students are not used to writing about themselves in academic situations. Second, many of them believe their everyday experiences are not significant enough to be the focus of their writing. But with the teacher's insistence in the first two weeks at the outset of the writing class, students become familiar with, and they will actually start to like, having their lives as the focus of their own writing. Comprone (1974) was right when he decided that giving students the chance to write about things they have known and experienced firsthand can naturally result in “effective expression.” Writing from firsthand knowledge will help the ‘organizational patterns’ of ideas and the grammatical correctness to develop naturally out of the “desire to express experience” in the best possible form. Likewise, it helps students to pay more attention to organization, paragraph structure, and how ideas relate in the text. Comprone further notes that this “will develop better thinkers, more perceptive ... writers who have both something to say and a variety of techniques and styles” to say it (pp. xv-xvi).

Having students' own experiences as the subject matter of their paragraphs helps the teacher a great deal when students' attention is directed to the necessity of producing grammatical language. It is repeatedly noticed that students feel more comfortable thinking of the grammar of their sentences in the revising processes when they write about themselves because they feel safe that they give correct information. Then what they need to worry about is presenting this information in correct and meaningful language to reach readers and affect them as desired. The same thing applies to expository and argumentative paragraphs. If topics of writing assignments are related to students' lives and interests, Aristotelian invention, ethics and politics remain largely at the center of writing and the teaching of composition—thus refuting the objections of scholars who oppose the teaching of the modes.

A very important element in this course of paragraph development is the structure of a good paragraph: *topic sentence*, *supporting ideas*, and a *concluding statement*. To ensure paragraph effectiveness, students need to know about paragraph *unity* and how to satisfy the criteria of *relevance*, *effective order*, and *inclusiveness* (see Thomas Kane 1983: 112). In both narration and description, these three criteria are achieved naturally as a story doesn't make sense unless the events are given in the right sequence, showing clear relatedness to each other. Likewise, a described scene will be clear if its components are given orderly in a way that resembles the original. But more care is needed when presenting details in other types of paragraph. Encouraging students to announce their writer's stand towards the beginning of their paragraph will help them establish the control they need in order to achieve unity and effectiveness.

It is also imperative to warn that teaching the modes of academic discourse should not develop into a fascination with the categories for their own sake. The modes are seen and presented in this class, not as a classification of discourse types, but as a strategy for the teaching of basic writing. Teachers should be warned that developing a fascination with the modes as categories and models for students to recognize, remember and follow will destroy the power of these modes as generative and organizational strategies to develop/express thoughts in a text. It might sound awkward to admit here that after teaching all these modes and having students practice developing paragraphs following the models I provide them with, I end the course telling students that when authors write, they naturally do not produce paragraphs that are wholly narrative, for example, descriptive, illustrative, or argumentative. I warn them that any single paragraph might employ several of these modes. Writers actually need to shift between the modes in a paragraph in order to cover

the topic and achieve the intended purpose. This warning is inevitable at the end of this first stage as students will be working with and producing longer, multi-paragraph texts in the following stages.

3. STAGE TWO: THE ACADEMIC ESSAY (AND/OR THE READING-WRITING) COURSE

After students have learned how to develop and structure a paragraph, they need to learn and practice writing the *academic essay* in a follow up course—preferably the following semester before they forget what they have learned in the first stage (course). This course must introduce the commonly practiced and well-known three-part-essay structure, which has actually been around since the time of Francis Bacon: an introduction, body paragraphs and a conclusion. Teachers of this class can experiment with different possibilities. It can be conducted as usually with different topics chosen or agreed upon for each essay; it can be designed as a reading-writing class, or it can be a theme-course, with all essays required investigating one theme.

It is very important to teach students the taken-for-granted essay structure. It helps them to develop the much needed sense of organization. Students as basic writers and trainees need to announce their subjects and writer's stand explicitly in the *introduction*. This will help them set a firm ground to build their essay on, to establish and keep control over ideas, to achieve unity, and to develop their sense of authorship. The *body paragraphs* detail and develop those main points announced in the introduction. They can develop using any of the modes of academic discourse learned in the previous course. Students need to be reminded that they should stick to the plan announced and should not ramble around with unrelated ideas. In other words, an essay should have a clear and straight line of thinking (a theme line) that readers can follow with no difficulty. When writing the *conclusion*, students have choices. They can summarize main points, restate the thesis with an appropriate difference in tone, and/or raise a new relevant point—opening new but clearly related possibilities.

To foster students' feeling of writing essays as a meaningful act that surpasses the immediate class goals of learning abstract writing strategies, this course can be designed as a shared reading-writing course (see Bizzell 2009, Bartholomae and Petrosky 1985, Fowler 1968, and many others). It is often noticed that good readers are good writers. Readers try to follow a writer's ideas; but writers try to enable someone else to follow the ideas they communicate. In both cases, what is of importance is the way ideas are presented and organized. A class as such provides teachers with a firm ground to foster students' awareness of the close connection and "the cognitive similarities between reading and writing" as two closely related and complementary language skills (see Kucer 1989: 159). Students, as readers and writers, need to improve their abilities to understand what a writer has to say, and how he/she puts ideas together in a most effective structure, paying attention to particular writing norms and methods of organization.

When using reading texts to teach writing, Kucer's (1989) "*guideposts*" can be helpful. It is important to teach students that specific details should not be lacking and should clearly relate to previous and subsequent concepts, or what is called "*Informativity*". Likewise, knowledge of text "*Logic*" and "*Coherence*" helps students to present points that make sense when considering what has been said and what the reader knows about the topic. Also of importance here is to direct students to the necessity of fulfilling their stated intentions—or "*Intentionality*." "*Situationality*" and "*intertextuality*" teach students to focus on thoughts that are relevant to the readings and assignment at hand (see Kucer:165-166). Using these guideposts will help students follow ideas in the text being read. They assist students develop ideas to include in their response to the text being read.

If the course is planned as such (a reading-writing course), the teacher needs to be careful when choosing the texts to be read throughout the semester. It is here where the teacher can cruise into students' lives, culture and what is important to them to help make their lives an integral part of their learning. The importance of such integration between reading/writing topics and life interests stems from the belief that a writer who knows rhetoric but has nothing to say or has no understanding of him/herself and the reader will fail to communicate any significant or effective message to that reader. When students understand and enjoy what they read, they could communicate ideas more clearly and with more depth and complexity on paper. For this reason, topics chosen should be ones that students will either be familiar with or topics that will attract their attention because of interest in the subject matter. Such readings will help students form personal stands on the topics they are asked to write about. The goal is to make learning to write an exciting, enlightening experience. This will help student-writers to discover their topics and to decide on noticeable purposes to be achieved from the act of writing. Writing becomes, as Sweeney (2012) says, "real-world writing" that does not exist in a vacuum, and which leads to effective development and expression of theme.

It may be worth pointing here that many teachers have developed this course into a writing-on-literature class—which provoked so much criticism and rejection on the part of American compositionists since the seventies of the last century. Much scholarship in Composition Studies criticizes the use of readings—and especially literary texts—in the writing class. For example, Stanley Fish (2008) condemns the fact that anthologies of readings become the central concern in class while the actual teaching of writing becomes marginalized and done on the sides. Fish accuses teachers who teach reading and literary texts in the writing class of having the claim that their work will "save the world." His answer to

these teachers is simply "save the world on your own time" and teach students writing, not literature, in the writing class. If this class is the only required course of essay-writing in an undergraduate English program, and it is wholly writing on literature, then there will be so much that students are not learning about and from writing. However, there would be no objection against such a course provided that students get the chance to focus on writing and the process of developing their own writing themes. Also important are the two conditions that Patricia Bizzell (2009) puts on a reading-writing class. First, teachers should help students develop proper reading and writing abilities to help them succeed in and outside college, and, second, the readings assigned should raise issues important to the students and related to their lives.

Another interesting possibility for the essay-development course is that it can be easily developed into a **theme course** with or without readings. One telling example is what I did in that one summer class when I had students in the first session read the article "I want a wife" by Judy Syfers (1971). The theme was the life of educated wives who have jobs in Jordan. It was surprising how students were shocked and motivated to search for answers to questions we all raised in class about the duties of a wife and a husband towards each other, towards their family and towards the society. The class developed from that one article several topics for essays related to the social and cultural environment we all found ourselves in. They either brought or demanded certain reading texts that covered some related points. Some students were encouraged more and tried to collect information from people such as wives, husbands, lawyers and judges as they tried to investigate the increase of divorce cases in Jordan among educated wives who have jobs. Others asked questions about our social, ethical and religious duties. Some met with scholars in the college of Shari'ah and Islamic Religion to ask questions, and they found more texts to read. Students of that class produced amazingly well-developed and meaningful essays on related issues they thought to be essential.

One important component of this essay-development/reading-writing course is **journal writing**. Journals can help students develop ideas and establish personal connections with the topics they are asked to discuss in essays. Assigned journals can be free expressions of thoughts for which students choose topics and focus, or they can be guided topics either planned and provided by the teacher or chosen and agreed upon in class by students in groups. Topics can be related to the readings assigned or completely free. What is important about them is that they are generally forms of free writing that provide open places to experiment with ideas and styles (as first promoted and called for by Peter Elbow, 1973). Journals are extremely useful in the prewriting stages when students are trying to form a line of thinking to develop in their essays. Students should not be forced to follow paragraph or essay format. They can ramble around in their ideas and paragraphs with one condition—they should be limited to the one focus point chosen for each journal because what they are saying in the journal is more important than grammar and form.

Journals provide students with free forums to try ideas. Students are asked in class to write quickly about what they think or feel in relation to the chosen topic. The one most important value of journals is that students develop what I like to call *fluency in writing*. It is noticed that, after rambling around with ideas in their journals, they start to write with ease and confidence. Writing becomes no more remote, out of reach, or a difficult task; it becomes easier and in hand for them. Students actually need to understand this—that they become better writers by practicing often and writing more.

4. STAGE THREE: THE ADVANCED-WRITING COURSE

After mastering the essay, it is suggested that students enroll in a more demanding course of Advanced Writing, in which they produce longer texts than the traditionally received 5-paragraph (a little longer or shorter) essays. Here, in this third course, teachers are asked to follow the change of paradigm (the drift towards personal, cultural, political, ethical, environmental, ... issues) that started in the late sixties and continued to shape the teaching of composition throughout the past few decades. What is important in this Advanced-Writing class is that students are directed/forced to act and feel like *authors*. They are pushed to develop that particular sense of *authorship* which real-world writers have over the texts they produce. Teachers are encouraged to adopt Donald Murray's admonition (1968) of initiating students into the writing process by having them go through the experience of working as *real authors* do. Instead of just giving students a set of rules to follow, it is important to emphasize that everyone has things to say and write, and that writing is a natural way of self-expression exactly like speaking.

In this course, the first thing the teacher will have to deal with is the binary of *student-author*. Students usually come to the writing class with the mode of a person who does not know how to write. They come with different attitudes. Some students want to learn, but while learning they keep acting like there is no significance whatsoever for the texts they produce. Other students just do not care; they need to finish the course as a fulfillment of their degree requirements. This 'student-stand' may present a problem. The very first thing a student-author needs to understand would be that authors actually write because they want to tell the world (i.e., their readers/audience) something they see as important (see Hurlbert & Blitz, 1991). The first job of the teacher, then, becomes to convince these students that though they are here in this class to learn how to write, they actually have things to write and tell their readers just like real authors have. In other words, they can be authors.

This author-attitude is vital and it is actually in the heart of all scholarship in Composition Studies. Johannah Rodgers (2011: 131) properly argues that theories of authorship have actually been behind all the competing theories and

pedagogies in the field since the early sixties. Rodgers accurately sees the Romantic notion of author (creator of original and genius texts) as "a gatekeeper" for current-traditionalists while for the expressivists and cognitivists the author is "a model" of the writing subject (i.e., the author as writing her/himself in the text produced). On the other hand, social-cultural theorists of writing view the author as a "socio-historical construct" (author—and the text—as the outcome of different social, economic, political, and ideological factors). The intertwined concepts of author, authorship, and authority together with related issues of agency and the ethics of ownership have been crucial to recent composition theories and the teaching of writing. Some scholars are concerned with the student-author binary. Others speculate different possibilities of creating opportunities for students to become authors and actually publish work. Many try to understand and foster or change students' understanding of authorship, author and of themselves as writers. Still, many others work on making students act and feel like authors exploring issues of agency and ownership.

Work suggested for this third course of advanced writing stems from these theories and divides mainly into two major tasks: a personal narrative and a community based survey/inquiry (thus trying to combine pedagogies of the expressivists with those of the socio-cultural activists). The mission hoped to be accomplished after doing these two main jobs is that students will be able to write thoroughly on topics of concern, discussing the topic and handling it from several, different—but closely related—aspects. Having to write ten to twenty typed pages on one topic will give students/authors the chance to go deep enough when tackling and presenting ideas to a reader. Teachers, then, will need to do their best to encourage students to feel like real authors who wish to present something of value to their readers.

The program I have been part of—as most English programs in Jordanian colleges and universities—has only two required writing courses with an elective research writing course. In a situation like this, the requirements of this course have to be part of stage-two (essay-development) course, teaching the two courses (the Essay Development and Advanced Writing) in one. The essay structure and format can be taught and students are required to write two or three short essays and to observe this form in their second book (the community-based assignment). Of course, the syllabus is so loaded, and most students—having no real experience of doing actual writing before this class—would think the class to be too demanding. They need to be encouraged and shown how it can be possible. They need be assured that though—yes—it is going to be hard work, it can be done and they can enjoy doing it if they work faithfully.

In the same way the paragraph-development course starts with the narrative descriptive modes, teachers are encouraged to start this advanced course with the personal narrative assignment. In the first class when students are given the syllabus, class talk needs to focus on giving details about the first book and how to choose appropriate topics. Students need to be encouraged (or even forced) to choose personal themes—explaining in details that a personal topic is the right choice for this first book ever in their lives since they know the ideas/content and they only need to worry about expressing these ideas effectively.

The teacher should emphasize how each student is the sole authority on her/his topic. It is worthwhile to discuss in this first meeting the meaning of the word *author* and its relation to the term "*authority*." A personal narrative seems to be the right place for inexperienced writers to begin practicing such an act of establishing authority. As they know their topics well, they will need to worry about how to express/represent this topic clearly and effectively to the reader. That is, they will be more concerned with effective expression than with finding ideas to include in the text.

Naturally students do most of the writing on their own, outside class time. After the first meeting, teachers will find classes go on between writing, complaining, encouraging, asking questions, raising problems, sharing parts of what students have written with the class until they actually finish the first draft. The process takes about eight hours of actual class work over three to four weeks. Then the revising processes start, working on developing ideas, checking relations between ideas and parts of the story, following characters and their presence in the plot and the setting, establishing order and organization in the text—in addition to checking form and language points such as paragraphing, choice of vocabulary, grammar especially the use of narrative (past) tenses, spelling and punctuation.

After finishing this first book/assignment, students will see writing differently as it has become a life experience for them rather than a school subject or a must-fulfill requirement. Having built their self-confidence in writing, students are ready to start the second assignment—the community inquiry book. It is a more demanding writing job in which they will have to collect information from other people. This assignment is built on Berlin's (1987, 1991, 1993, and 1996) and Blitz & Hurlbert's (1997) scholarship and notion of the writing class as a forum for cultural criticism. The "cultural project" in Composition Studies is "concerned with the ways social formations and practices are involved in the shaping of consciousness" (Berlin, 1991: 49). This assignment aims at helping students become agents of pending social/economic/ political changes in their communities.

For this second assignment, students (in groups of three or four) have to decide on a topic from the immediate community and the society around them. Teachers should direct and encourage them to choose a topic that means something to them, a topic which they need to understand better, to learn more about, and maybe affect. So a good part of doing the assignment is collecting data through which they learn and form clear stands on their topics. They shouldn't be allowed to use any published or broadcast material as they still have not received any training on using and documenting sources. The data for this assignment has to be collected from people who have firsthand knowledge and experience of the topic chosen. Students are asked to do onsite visits to these people, conduct interviews, do observations, distribute questionnaires, and collect all the data needed to write their narrative, descriptive, and analytical report and argument of the issue they choose to investigate. The final product to be graded must be in an essay format with introduction, body

and conclusion parts. This essay has to be fifteen to twenty typed pages in which the topic is introduced, discussed with details from the field together with the writer's analyses, understanding, suggestions and/or recommendations. So may be the teacher will need to discuss with students and teach them how to conduct an interview, how to build a questionnaire, what to do in onsite visits, and how to do observation. All these are advanced academic skills that most students in this class have never studied or practiced before. They need be introduced to them. As essential, the teacher of this class must be aware of scholarship on *peer review*, the use of small groups, and *collaborative* writing.

It is important to mention here two other vital constituents of this advanced class. One is the journal writing. Students are encouraged and actually required to keep a journal in which they record their feelings, thoughts, what they discover, what they learn, and what they experience while working on the two major assignments. The second constituent is the individual and group writing conferences that the instructor needs to arrange and conduct with the students in and outside class time before and during their actual work on the assignments. These conferences are critical to help students understand and accomplish the work as required and expected. (Teachers will need to check the scholarship available in the field related to these two activities.)

5. STAGE FOUR: WRITING-A-RESEARCH-PAPER COURSE

This course is a formal introduction to students to the means and methods of handling a research project. Students, after having built writing experience and awareness of the writer's work, are now ready for the fourth writing course in which they must be introduced to research writing for academic purposes. This course should be designed to help students experience the several stages a writer goes through when writing a research paper starting from the first step of selecting a subject to research. Students need be trained on narrowing the subject down into a specific topic with a workable thesis statement, outlining a work plan to decide what measures will be needed to accomplish the job, checking related materials from the library and sources, preparing for field work and data collection processes, doing actual work to collect data from the field (e.g., interviews, observations, experiments, and questionnaires), and starting writing until the whole paper is put together. Training should start with using sources and documentation. So an introduction to style manuals such as the MLA, the APA or any other is a must. It is important that students realize from the beginning that they need to make clear to the reader which ideas are their own and which ones belong to other writers.

Using other writers' ideas necessitates teaching students how to respond to readings and deal with ideas, viewpoints, and opinions of others in order to employ these in their own writings. For this purpose, the first ten chapters of Charles Bazerman's book (1992) *The Informed Writer: Using Sources in the Disciplines* very useful. These chapters cover basic skills that the writer of a research paper definitely needs. Students need be directed into the necessity of reacting to readings. Chapter two of the book teaches the use of annotations and journals to record one's own thoughts while reading sources connected with the research topic. Then, students need to use these ideas in their own writing either by paraphrasing, summarizing or direct quoting (chapters three, four and ten). In addition, students need training on how to develop their own responses to what they read in sources (chapter five). To do this, they naturally need to recognize the different voices present in the texts (chapter six) and to analyze the author's purposes and techniques in presenting ideas (chapter seven). One more important skill is comparing and synthesizing different sources on the same topic (chapter nine). Finally, students need to make sure they are adding something to their topic, i.e. that they are involved in an actual act of creating knowledge. I use Bazerman's as a text book. This is the only writing class I use a textbook to teach.

The other necessary thing students need in this course—as stated above—is documentation using the APA, MLA or any other style manual. A summary chapter on these styles can be very helpful to students with some guidance on how to use them. Diana Hacker's (1999) summary chapter in *A Writer's Reference* is recommended. This chapter is very useful as it covers all necessary points in these manuals. But of course, any other summary chapter or the original manuals should do the work. Other texts for the course might include a chapter on how to conduct an interview, a chapter on developing and using questionnaires, in addition to a chapter on choosing research population and research sample. These can be given to individual students depending on the kind of research work they will be involved in. They are important to researchers in Applied Linguistics and can easily be found in different sources.

It is necessary that students are required to produce a piece of authentic research as a main requirement in this course. It will help students feel that their work—and learning of how to write a research paper—is actually meaningful especially if they are given the chance to choose a topic they are interested in. It is recommended to give this research paper the final exam grade (%50 of the course total grade). In the final exam day, each student may be asked to give a five-to-ten-minute presentation (worth of %5 or %10) of her/his research work. Students' work in the semester is given the other %40 percent of the total grade. Distributing grades in this way helps teacher and students focus on the actual work of doing research. It will help students perceive research work as a significant learning experience—instead of just having to know and may be remember some rules and ideas.

It can be useful to require students to write a first personal, narrative/analytic paper about their own education (school and/or university) experience. A paper like this can be inspiring to students who did not have prior experience with writing. It will help build a needed level of intimacy with the act of writing, discovering and expressing ideas. Many

students can develop topics for their main research project from points related to their own experience in learning. Writing such a personal paper will help them see how important these points.

Other than that, students are generally encouraged to choose topics related to their major: English—which is part of their life and what is important to them. They can also be given the chance to suggest topics they have interest in. Such topics must be discussed in individual and group conferences to investigate and evaluate the possibilities of such suggestions for meaningful research projects.

6. STAGE FIVE: THE CREATIVE-WRITING COURSE

Having learned and practiced different forms and levels of academic writing, students will be ready to engage in more authentic acts of writing. The following are general notes on what are the possibilities related to the content and scope of a course on creative writing. In my twelve years of teaching at the university, I could not grasp a chance to actually realize and teach a creative writing course. Creative writing is a largely neglected area of training in our English departments. It must be acknowledged; creative writing is not very attractive to teachers who have to deal with students who almost know nothing about writing in general—let alone writing in English, which is a foreign language for them. A course on creative writing is seen as a luxurious commodity which English departments can do very well without. I have to argue against this understanding.

Many compositionists have been calling on teachers of college writing to secure a place for creative writing in their course plans. Douglass Hesse (2010) urges practitioners in the field of Composition Studies to pay more attention to what he sees as a natural link between college writing and creative writing as the two fields share a common interest that should bind them in a richer, more coherent view of writing. Hesse has a point. Creative writing can make the actual realization of the writing skills students acquire in our writing classes and connect them with real life needs. Creative writing is not only about fiction, poetry (the known literary genres) and people who have the talent and luxury to enjoy the play of language. No, it actually includes several non-fiction and functional writing forms that can have real life, practical applications and that our students badly need in their university years and in their real life endeavors, after they graduate.

In this course, different genres should be introduced, and students should be encouraged to produce their own authentic texts. It should be a workshop-based course that focuses on the practice of a variety of forms and genres: fiction, poetry, and creative non-fiction. The main aim of this course should be to introduce students to the different types and forms of writing. One form is drama and plays. Students need to know the meaning of writing for stage, or how to write a play for radio. They also need to know about the television drama. They need to be introduced to the concept of characterization and how to create believable characters, how to choose names for these characters, and how much description to give for each character to help readers follow the roles given to every character clearly. Students also need some training on writing dialogues, and on how to pay attention to the setting in which the story is set. It is an avenue to big business that students may wish to imagine and venture.

The non-fiction part might also include several forms such as: the personal essay, memoir, and journalism. It may also be useful to introduce students to the art of writing textbooks. In addition to these writing forms, students need training on other forms of creative writing that are needed for more practical reasons such as writing an article for a newspaper or/and a magazine. Here it is necessary to point out the differences between writing for a daily newspaper and, for example, a monthly magazine. Another form of writing is the radio talk and the radio story. One more idea could be writing for children including those who are under seven years old and the older ones up to the young adults. It is important to show students how this writing differs from all other types. One more creative form is the autobiography which may include forms of travel books. Finally, the instructor may think it is useful to include a unit on the art of writing curriculum vitae (CV), and another on writing a proposal for a research or for a business or work project. The act of producing such documents in itself is a creative art that needs training.

The course in general should aim at teaching students to write with clarity and precision. By encouraging imaginative thinking and accuracy, the instructor should help students to become intellectually independent while paying attention to points such as audience, point of view, language, and tone. Students need to submit their own original texts to be discussed in class and in individual conferences with the instructor. They should be required to participate in workshops that emphasize specificity, precision, and heightened editing skills, with publication as a desirable outcome. They might be required to submit their work to the student newspaper—for example.

7. CONCLUSION

A very important part of every writing course, or stage, is teaching students the importance and critical role of revision in the rewriting stage of the process. Students need to be encouraged to start writing to produce a first draft

without worrying much about or paying attention to language correctness and grammar or even the organization of ideas. But when the first draft is ready, they should get involved in serious revising processes. Compositionists usually say that the actual *writing* stage to produce a first draft makes only one fourth of the whole *writing process*. At least half of the time should be used to revise: develop, correct, and rewrite until the text reaches its final form—i.e., the *rewriting* stage. (The other part is given to *prewriting* activities of deciding a topic, narrowing its scope into a workable theme, collecting data, in addition to the physical, psychological and mental preparations of oneself to write.)

The first four courses in this writing program will be useful if they are part of the requirements of the first two years of the whole English program. Having the courses delayed or scattered over the four years with no clear connection between them will weaken the desired effect. It makes a lot of sense to require students to finish the fourth writing course (the research writing) in their second year before they get into the more advanced major courses of Literature and Linguistics. This can help instructors of these advanced courses to design assignments. Students will then have no problem or excuse in fulfilling any writing assignment as they should have built enough knowledge and skill in doing academic writing by the end of their second year. In this case, the advanced linguistics and literature courses will be more meaningful as students can be required to do more than just remembering bits and pieces of information to repeat when answering our exam questions.

After finishing an extensive and comprehensive writing program like the one described in this paper, students will be able to reflect on ideas and actually respond to what they read. As teachers of linguistics and literature, we expect students to engage in such intellectual activities. It is not a secret that we all expect our students to form writer's stand on the topics, and maintain and defend whatever stand they see justifiable—like real writers/thinkers who have a goal and a purpose. Above all, a program of writing as the one described here will make the link students need to see between what they do in college and their lives and prospective future job demands.

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