

A CRITICAL REVIEW ON THE COURSE SELECTION FOR WEB-BASED INSTRUCTION (WBI) INTEGRATION

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ABSTRACT

Web-based instruction (WBI) has been proposed by Mah and Khor (2015) as a supplementary instructional tool to tackle the writing problems faced by Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) students besides to fulfil the writing needs of UiTM learners and instructors due to the limitations found in the existing web-based writing systems. Hence, the objective of this study is to select an appropriate English course by conducting a critical review of literature based on the past studies involving UiTM English courses as well as the types of English courses offered by UiTM before embracing WBI as the course's supplementary instructional tool. After scrutinising all the UiTM English courses offered in 2013, BEL422 Report Writing was identified as the most proper course to be integrated with WBI owing to its syllabus, course structure, and assessment components that focus on proposal and report writing as the main learning outcome. Through the integration of WBI for instructional purpose, students who have registered in this course can acquire their writing competency to communicate effectively in an academic form of written English. Therefore, BEL422 Report Writing was opted to be integrated with WBI as the content development to facilitate the teaching process as well as enhance the learning outcomes. The future study will look into the adoption of Web-based Cognitive Writing Instruction (WeCWI) as the framework of WBI development for the enhancement of writing performance and critical thinking.

Keywords: critical review, BEL422 Report Writing, poor writing skill, WBI, WeCWI

1.0 INTRODUCTION

UiTM students are facing difficulties in mastering good writing skill including complexity of writing skills, low literacy skills, interlanguage errors, low language proficiency, lack of critical thinking, low information literacy, and second language (L2) writing anxiety (Mah and Khor (2015)). As supported by the writing needs of UiTM learners and instructors as well as the limitations found in the existing web-based writing systems (Mah and Khor (2015)), the researchers proposed using WBI as a supplementary instructional tool to tackle the students' writing problems.

2.0 CRITICAL REVIEW

English is given such a great emphasis as the medium of instruction (Nor Aslah Adzmi, Samsiah Bidin, Syazliyati Ibrahim, & Kamaruzaman Jusoff, 2009; Rushita Ismail & Muriatul Khusmah Musa, 2006). It has become the course references as well as the most important subject in the curriculum. Besides, it is also a mandatory course for all UiTM students (Rushita Ismail & Muriatul Khusmah Musa, 2006). Most universities offer English courses like English for Specific Purposes (ESP), English for Academic Purposes (EAP) and English for Occupational Purposes (EOP) to expose the tertiary students to different kinds of English language skills apart from what they had learned in secondary schools.

The Department of English Language and Linguistics is the largest department in the Academy of Language Studies that caters to all the English language needs of UiTM. English language courses are compulsory subjects in Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) to be taken by students at pre-diploma, diploma, and degree levels (Academy of Language Studies, 2012). Pre-diploma and diploma students in Semester 1, 2, and 3 are required to enrol in General English courses while undergraduate students are required to take EAP, ESP, or EOP courses. Some studies conducted on different UiTM English courses from 2003 till 2012 are summarised in Table 1.

Table 1: Studies Conducted on Different UiTM English Courses from 2003 till 2012

English Courses	Year	Researchers	Studies
BEL 200 Mainstream English 1 (previous code)	2010	Chittra Muthusamy, Faizah Mohamad, Siti Norliana Ghazali, & Angelina Subrayan @ Michael.	Enhancing ESL writing creativity via a literature based language instruction.
BEL 260 Preparatory Course for MUET	2003	Leele Susana Jamian, & Emily Jothee Mathai.	Reading attitudes of UiTM Penang students: An exploratory study.
	2005	Noriah Ismail, Sumarni Maulan, & Nor Haniza Hasan.	The impact of teacher written feedback on students' revised drafts: A study among part 2 Diploma students in UiTM Johor.
	2005	Rasaya Marimuthu, & Elangkeeran Sabapathy	The effects of concept mapping as a cognitive strategy in reading comprehension lessons: An experimental study on a group of BEL 250 students of UiTM Terengganu.
BEL 311 English for Academic Purposes	2009	Mah, B. Y., & Er, A. N.	Writing Web logs in the ESL classroom: A study of student perceptions and the Technology Acceptance Model.
	2010	Cheang, E. K., Mah, B. Y., & Ch'ng, P. E.	Preference of learning style among the diploma students of UiTM Penang: An overview.
	2012	Noriah Ismail, Saadiyah Darus, & Supyan Hussin	ESL tertiary students' writing needs: A framework for a supplementary online writing program.
BEL422 Report Writing	2009	Siti Akmar Abu Samah, Kamaruzaman Jusoff, & Abu Daud Silong	Does spoon-feeding impede independent learning?

At UiTM Penang Branch, English language courses are of two types: proficiency and specific purpose courses. At the diploma level, students are required to enrol for the general proficiency English courses such as BEL120, BEL130, BEL260, and BEL311, which are

compulsory subjects and a requisite for graduation. Degree students register for ESP courses such as BEL422/420, BEL 432, and BEL442 (Academy of Language Studies, 2012).

Nor Aslah Adzmi et al. (2009) in a study on the academic English language needs about specific writing skills discovered that most students viewed their performance in writing technical reports as above average, while subject-specialists viewed the students' performance in writing those as below average. The results indicate that the students require more exposure to and practice in English. The English language instructors meanwhile responded that the current English Language courses also have not contributed much towards enhancing the students' language skills.

BEL422 Report Writing, which carries two credit units with two credit hours, is one of the UiTM core English courses at degree level. This course introduces the practical aspects of preparing and presenting reports in oral and written forms. There are five course outcomes and ten areas in the course content. Students are taught to write a report based on a combination of primary and secondary research and adapt the written report for oral presentation (Academy of Language Studies, 2010a).

Web-based Cognitive Writing Instruction or WeCWI is a hybrid e-framework for the development of a web-based instruction (WBI), which contributes towards instructional design (Mah, 2014) and language development (Mah, 2015). It was formulated based on the theoretical-and-pedagogical principles, which promotes literacy, language, cognitive, and psychological developments. WeCWI synthesises language acquisition, composition studies, cognitive theories, and e-learning with the injection of web 2.0 as the instructional platform to enhance the writing performance and critical thinking.

3.0 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Some observable setbacks between the course prescription and authentic classroom practices were identified during the critical review. For example, in the case of BEL422, there is no prescribed text book for this course through three recommended texts, four references, and four internet sources are recommended as references for the students and instructors. The course evaluation requirements include producing a report of 1500-2000 words, oral presentation of the written report, a test and the attendance (Academy of Language Studies, 2010a). The report contributes the highest weighting at 40 percent. The students need to complete the informational report in groups of three to four (Academy of Language Studies, 2009).

Based on the BEL422 Report Writing course syllabus (Academy of Language Studies, 2010b), all classes are limited to a maximum of 20 students. However, in the real practice, most BEL422 classes have more than 20 students. In addition, many instructors employ a single writing approach to teach writing since process writing approach is prescribed as the method of teaching for BEL422 Report Writing. Besides, no proper channel and well-structured instructional tool is initiated to maximise the pedagogical potential of the internet though some web links are recommended for instructors to use as students' online learning activities. To perform well in this course, lecturers' guidance and feedback as well as the internet have become the fundamental sources of input as there is no prescribed textbook found in this course.

4.0 CONCLUSION

After reviewing the existing English courses offered by Academy of Language Studies in UiTM as well as the course content of BEL422 Report Writing, it was found appropriate to be integrated with WBI as the content development since this course focusses on developing the learners' writing competency to produce a research report. The recommended study in the future is the adoption of WeCWI as the framework for WBI development to enhance the L2 learners' writing performance and critical thinking.

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