Targeting L2 Writing Proficiencies:
Instruction and Areas of Change in Students' Writing over Time

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ABSTRACT

Writing in a second language is a complex activity requiring proficiency in a number of different areas. Writing programmes often focus on particular areas of skill and knowledge that are seen as important to the overall process. This study looks at the effects of the focus of teaching on student writing. Fifty students on an eight-week pre-sessional programme were asked to write a 250-word assignment at the start and the end of their courses. These were graded on a nine-band scale using a seven-trait multiple-trait scoring system. The results show that discourse organisation and argumentation, which were the primary focus of classroom study, improved more than other areas. This suggests that tutors should look at writing proficiency in terms of an overall balance of proficiencies and that targeting aspects of student writing can affect this overall balance.

KEYWORDS: L2 writing; writing instruction; English for academic purposes; writing assessment; multiple-trait scoring.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Writing is a multidimensional skill requiring knowledge and proficiency in a number of areas. It is complex because of the interaction of the writer's knowledge, experience, skills, culture, and identity with the norms and cognitive demands of the task at hand (Archibald & Jeffery, 2000; Cumming, 1998; Grabe & Kaplan, 1996; Levy & Ransdell, 1996).

When writers write, they bring to the task knowledge of the process of writing and of the strategies they will use in composing. They bring knowledge of the subject matter to be written about and plans for how it can be ordered and structured for presentation (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1987; Faigley & Witte, 1981; Flower & Hayes, 1981; Hayes, 1996). They bring knowledge of the product of writing, of the formal structures of language and of discourse structure and the construction of texts (Connor & Johns, 1990; De Beaugrande, 1980, 1984). They bring knowledge of the situation within which the writing takes place, its social and professional context and how the audience and purpose affect the text, its genre and how it relates to other texts in the field. They bring their experience of the expectations of the reader within the discourse community and of the forms, social contexts, genres, and expectations of their background culture (Bruffee, 1986; Cope & Kalantzis, 1993; Fairclough, 1989; Ivanic, 1998; Johns 1997).

Writing in a second language is a distinct area (Leki, 1996; Silva, 1993, 1997) with its own additional complications in the form of proficiency in the target language (Bardovi-Harlig, 1995; Curnming, 1989), knowledge of the target language genres and associated sociocultural expectations (Cope & Kalantzis, 1993; Silva, Leki & Carson, 1997; Swales, 1990), and interaction between the writer's L1 experiences and the meaning of literacy in the target language culture (Bell 1995; Connor, 1996; Cope & Kalantzis, 1993,2000; Mohan & Lo, 1985; Pennycook, 1996). L2 writing is also cognitively different from L1 writing in a number of important areas (Cumming, 1998; Grabe, 2001; Manchón, Roca de Larios, & Murphy, 2000; Zimmerman, 2000).

It is central to writing instruction that the knowledge and skills that make a student a better writer can be taught and that novice writers make progress as a direct result of the instruction they receive. In a second language learning context, a student's progress in writing is ofien assumed to be simply a part of the overall increase in their language proficiency. It is clear that students' ability to write clearly and accurately depends to an extent on their general level of proficiency in the target language (Bardovi-Harlig, 1995; Cumming, 1989). However, there are aspects of proficiency that are either specific to students' writing, or that may be specifically seen to develop through writing. Instruction in writing should be aimed specifically at improving proficiency in these areas.

Instruction should affect student accuracy in the use of the target language in their writing and also the range of choice of structure and vocabulary available to them for use in

writing. For instance, Tsang and Wong (2000) studied the effects of explicit grammar teaching on student writing. Although they found no significant improvement, they claim that there were indications that the students were able to write with greater readiness and use more mature syntax.

Instruction should affect the student's understanding of the cultural and contextual appropriacy of particular structures or vocabulary, their understanding of the norms and expectations of the target genres regarding form, and their understanding of the norms of the target genres regarding the choice of information and its sequencing and structuring. Archibald (1994) investigated how the discourse proficiency of secondary school students writing in English as a second language developed in different age groups. He found that students improved in their use of discourse markers and links and that they developed a better feel for the contextual appropriacy of their language. Shaw and Liu (1998) analysed the ways in which the features associated with academic register changed over the period of a pre-sessional course in English for academic purposes. They found an increase in areas such as impersonality, formality, and hedging in the students' writing at the end of the course. They attribute this to an increased understanding of the norms of academic writing and a move away from a single 'neutral' variety of English that learners tend to use for all purposes.

Instmction in the processes of composition should have an effect on the students' ability to reflect on their writing and to produce more effective and appropriate texts in the target language. Sengupta (2000), working with secondary school students, describes the effects of giving instruction in revision strategies to writers of English as a second language. She found that explicit teaching of these strategies had a measurable effect on the quality of the students' final draft. Cresswell (2000) reported on the effects of students learning to self-monitor their writing and to pay attention to the process and the organization of their writing. He reported improvement in the students' ability to pay attention to the content and organization of their writing. Connor and Farmer (1990) found that teaching second language writers topical stmcture analysis to use as a revision strategy had a positive effect on the clarity of focus of the final texts. At a more general level, Akyel and Kamisli (1997) reported on the effects of EFL writing instmction on composing in both first and second languages. They found that the students used similar composing strategies in both their L1 (Turkish) and L2 (English) and that writing instruction in the L2 had a positive effect both on their writing processes and on their attitudes to writing in the two languages.

The direct effects of different types of feedback on student writing have also been analysed. Ferris (1997) found that changes made by students in response to teacher comments did have a positive effect on the overall quality of their papers. Villamil and de Guerrero (1998) investigated the impact of peer revision on L2 writing and found that it had a positive effect on the quality of the final draft. Berg (1999) trained students in how to give effective peer response to writing. She found that this training had a positive effect on the students' revision types and on the quality of their texts.

The purpose of this study is to discover if the targeting of those features which are perceived the students' weak points in the teaching of writing has an effect on the way in which students' writing irnproves. The studies mentioned above have either investigated how certain aspects of instruction rnay affect the overall quality of the students' writing (Connor & Farmer, 1990; Cresswell, 2000; Sengupta, 2000), or have analysed particular aspects of student writing for irnproverment (Archibald, 1994; Shaw & Liu, 1998; Tsang & Wong, 2000). This study investigates whether the quality of students' writing improves 'across the board' as a reflection of a general irnproverment in language proficiency or if specific aspects, targeted by instruction and feedback, irnprove differentially.

In order to achieve this general aim, the study was guided by the following research questions:

1) When scored using a multiple-trait rating scale, does student writing show evidence of different levels of proficiency across the traits scored?

2) At the end of aperiod of study, does the change in scores on individual traits, relative to scores at the start of the course, rejlect a general change or one that shows greater movement in some traits?

3) Can the change in scores on individual traits be related to the focus of instruction in writing over the course of study?

II. METHOD
II.1. Participants

Fifty students on eight-week summer pre-sessional courses in English for academic purposes (EAP) cornpleted all of the parts of this study. The participants consisted of 16 females and 34 males from 21 different countries and with 12 different first languages (Chinese, 14; Arabic, 7; Spanish, *6;* Greek, 6; Japanese, 5; Thai, 3; French, 2; German, 2; Bahasa Indonesia, 2; Italian, 1; Turkish, 1; Russian, 1). Their level of English proficiency was broadly 'upper intermediate' and fairly homogeneous. Twenty-six of the students had taken the Educational Testing Service's (ETS) Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) prior to enrolling on the pre-sessional prograrnme (median score 537) and 21 had taken the British Council administered International English Language Testing System (IELTS) (median score 5.5). Of the remaining three students, one had a *Matura* from Switzerland; one an exarnination set by the Ministry of Education in Iran (claiming TOEFL equivalence); and the third a score of 700 on ETS's Test of English for Intemational Cornmunication (TOEIC). Ten of the students — five with IELTS scores below 5.5, four with TOEFL scores below 530 plus the Iranian student — had attended a four or six-week general English language programme immediately before entering the eight-week pre-sessional course.

Information gathered from their application forms for the pre-sessional course, or direct

from their prospective university departments, showed that almost **all** of the students were planning to **take** a postgraduate academic programme **after** their summer language study. Many of these students had received offers from departments conditional on their passing the **pre-**sessional course. The students could therefore be considered to be fairly consistent in their own goals and motivations in attending the pre-sessional programme.

II.2. The Instruction

Pre-sessional courses of various lengths are **run** at the University of Southampton in the summer vacations between July and September each year. The **primary** aim of the programme is to prepare prospective university students for the linguistic demands of a programme of academic study (usually at postgraduate level). The programme **provides** 28 hours of classroom study each week with a considerable focus on academic study skills and writing.

The programme **takes** an EAP approach to writing (Hamp-Lyons & Kroll, 1997; Jordan 1997; Swales, 1990) that focuses on discourse **genres** and the ways in which information and arguments need to be stmctured to fit the expectations of academic discourse communities. In the early part of the programme the writing sessions **deal** with semantic relations, paragraphing, and argumentation with a **shift** in the latter half of the course towards broader information stmcturing and overall textual organization. Students are expected to draft and **redraft assignments** to be handed in each week.

The format of the course and its content and methods of instmction are fairly similar to those of other U.K. university based pre-sessional programrnes. The programme is accredited by the British Association for Lecturers **in** English for Academic Purposes (BALEAP), a peer accreditation scheme for university preparation courses in EAP. To this extent there was a broad fit between the organization of the programme and the aims and expectations of the students.

The participants in this study were taught in severa1 small groups (typical group size was 10–12 students) throughout their programme of study. The tutors were **all** experienced and qualified English language teachers who had a clear understanding of the course aims **and** the teaching philosophy. They **also** worked closely together on a day-to-day basis and discussed classes and shared materials.

11.3. Tasks and Procedures

The students were asked to complete a **short** writing task at the start of their programme and were given a second, similar task in the final week. The tasks were taken under timed test conditions as part of a placement and a final achievement test. Students were given 40 minutes to complete each task.

The tasks asked the students to present a written argument or case to an educated non-specialist audience on a particular topic. The topic was presented in the form of a statement

followed by a question. Students were asked to write at least 250 words. The format of each task was identical to that of the second section of the writing module taken as part of the academic version of the IELTS examination and examples of these tests can be found in a number of IELTS preparation books (e.g. de Witt, 1992; Jakeman & McDowell, 1999).

The choice of task affects the linguistic and organizational features of the final text as well as the students' ability to perform adequately (Archibald, 1994; Koda, 1993; Way, Joiner & Seaman, 2000). Very similar tasks were used in this study in order to ensure that the final texts were all of the same type and that task specific differences were held to a minimum.

This particular format of task was chosen as providing the students with sufficient opportunity to present and develop an organised argument in order to communicate their position to the reader. The grading scheme used by IELTS for these tasks and the one chosen for this study are closely related (Carroll, 1981; Hamp-Lyons, 1991; Hamp-Lyons & Henning, 1991). The tasks were also chosen for their accessibility and their familiarity — it is likely that most of the students would have done similar format tasks using similar topics before, either in language classes or in preparation for IELTS or the TOEFL (TWE).

The following sets of task prompts were used:

1) The first car appeared on British roads in 1888. By the year 2000 there may be as many as 29 million vehicles on British Roads.
Should alternative forms of transport be encouraged and international laws introduced to control car ownership and use?

2) The threat of nuclear weapons maintains world peace. Nuclear power provides cheap and clean energy.
Do the benefits of nuclear technology outweigh the disadvantages?

3) It is inevitable that as technology develops so traditional cultures must be lost. Technology and tradition are incompatible — you cannot have both together.
To what extent do you agree or disagree with this statement?
Give reasons for your answer.

Nineteen of the students were given task 1 as their initial writing test and task 2 as their final test. The remaining 31 students were given task 2 as their initial test and task 3 as their final test.

All of the students were able to complete the tasks within the time allowed. A review of the texts showed that all of the students appeared to have understood the task requirements and had been able to work within the topics.

III. DATA ANALYSIS

Student productions were graded using a multiple-trait marking scheme (Hamp-Lyons, 1991; Hamp-Lyons & Henning, 1991). This scheme scored each text in the following seven sub-scales:

> i) Communicative Quality: The writer's skill in communicating the message to the reader. This corresponds to an "overall impression" judgement in holistic scoring.
> ii) Interestingness: Creativity and novelty.
> iii) Referencing: Use of concrete examples and relevant illustrations showing cultural awareness.
> iv) Organization: Structure of the message.
> v) Argumentation: How convincing the writer is.
> vi) Linguistic accuracy: Correctness of grammar, spelling, and punctuation so as not to impede communication.
> vii) Linguistic appropriacy: Strength of grammatical and lexical features chosen (Hamp-Lyons & Henning, 1991: 344).

Each of the sub-scales of this scheme was scored on a nine-band scale with one being the lowest score and nine the highest (the complete list of band descriptors are reproduced in Appendix 1). The banding on this scale is similar to that currently in use on the IELTS test and has its roots in the development of the ELTS test in the early 1980s (Carroll, 1981).

Assessment in writing should ask students to "demonstrate their membership in the community of fluent writers of English" (Hamp-Lyons & Kroll, 1997: 17). It should reflect not only the stage of general linguistic proficiency of the student, but also their ability to use the forms appropriately within the social and professional conventions of writing in the target language. A text is more than simply accurate language —it has textuality and a communicative purpose (Connor & Johns, 1990; De Beaugrande, 1980, 1984; De Beaugrande & Dressler, 1981). It also has genre specific features and a social and cultural context (Bruffee, 1986; Cope & Kalantzis, 1993; Fairclough, 1989; Ivanic, 1998; Johns 1997; Swales, 1990).

Multiple-trait scoring of writing allows a focus on textual features that have been the target of classroom instruction. It has long been recognised by teachers that working on a student's linguistic accuracy alone has only a limited effect on their writing. Overall proficiency in English does affect writing (Cumming, 1989) but it is not the only factor. Familiarity with the genre and with its norms of language use and information structuring are equally important. Genre familiarity and acculturation to the norms of the discourse community are seen as key aims in English for Academic Purposes (EAP) writing programmes. This is reflected in many of the writing textbooks used on these courses (e.g. Jordan, 1999; Swales & Feak, 1994; White & McGovern, 1994). Teaching is targeted on, what are perceived to be, the students' weak points —typically argument, focus, and organization —rather than on simply 'improving' writing.

Each of the scripts was initially graded using this scale by a single rater. These were then moderated by a second rater and differences between the two were resolved by discussion. Neither of the raters had taught these students on their pre-sessional courses and all *100* initial and final scripts were rated together after the students had completed their programmes. Both raters were familiar with the IELTS test and had considerable experience with scripts of this type and with multiple-trait marking schemes. Both of the raters were also experienced EAP practitioners and were well versed in the British academic tradition.

IV. RESULTS

A *2* x *7* ANOVA (time x trait) was conducted, showing a significant main effect of time (f=115.33, df=1,49, p< .05), and of trait (f=7.66, df=6,44, p< .05). There was also a significant interaction of time and trait (f=8.64, df=6,44, p<.05), showing that the effect of time was greater with some traits than with others.

IV.1. Variation Between Traits on the Initial Task

Mean scores for each of the traits scored in the initial task ranged between *4.3* and *4.72.* The highest mean scores were gained on Communicative Quality and Interestingness and the lowest on Organization and Argumentation (See Figure *1).* Although the mean scores appear to be very similar for each of the traits, the repeated measures ANOVA showed that the variation between traits overall on the initial task was significant (*p*< .05).

IV.2. Variation Between Traits on the Final Task

Mean scores for each of the traits scored in the final task ranged between *5.36* and *5.78.* The highest mean scores were gained on Organization and the lowest on Linguistic Accuracy (see Figure *2).* From lowest to highest the overall difference in mean scores across the traits appears rather similar to those on the initial task and was also statistically significant.
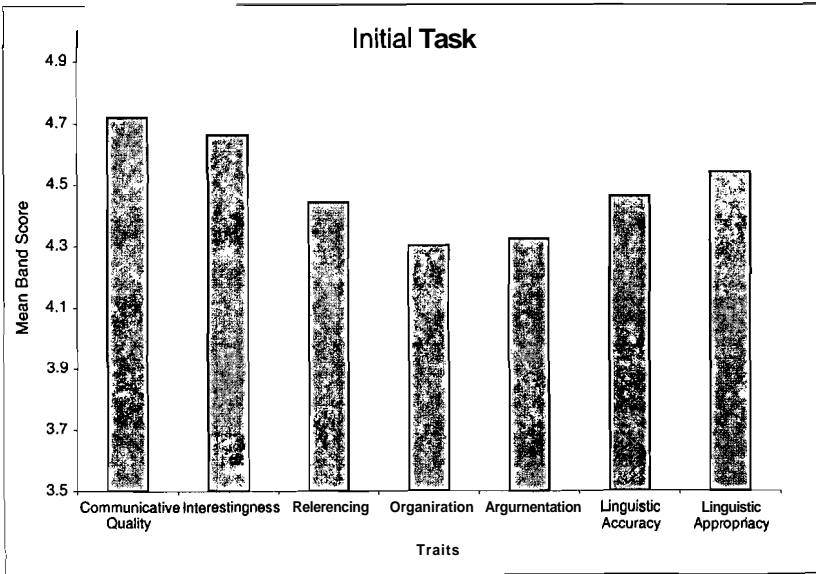
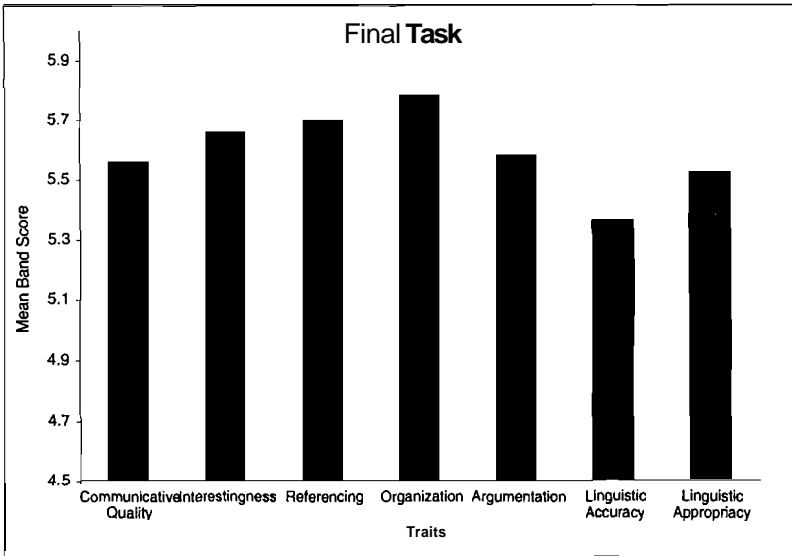*Figure 1:* **The variation in mean band score between traits on the initial task**

Figure 2: **The variation in mean band score between traits on the final task**

IV.3. Difference Between the Initial and Final Tasks

The mean difference between the scores on the initial and final tasks (taken as an average of the difference for each trait) was an increase of 1.1 bands. Taking the traits individually, the mean increase between the initial and final tasks for each is given in Table 1.

Trait	Mean initial band score	Mean final band score	Change
Communicative Quality	4.72	5.56	0.84
Interestingness	4.66	5.66	1
Referencing	4.44	5.7	1.26
Organization	4.3	5.78	1.48
Argumentation	4.32	5.58	1.26
Linguistic Accuracy	4.46	5.36	0.9
Linguistic Appropriacy	4.54	5.52	0.98

Table 1: The mean band scores for the initial and final tasks

The increase in band score between the initial and final tasks on each of the traits represents a statistically significant ($p < .05$) change.

The overall frequency of occurrence of band scores on the initial and final tasks is represented in Figure 3. This shows a quite definite shift in the scores awarded between the initial and final tasks. Most of the students scored within the range of band four or five for each of the traits on the initial task (Median score 4, Standard deviation 0.48) with a shift towards bands five and six in the final task (Median score 6, Standard deviation 0.71). Individual students tended to score rather similarly across the seven traits on a particular task with typical differences of one or two bands between traits at most.

Although the trend was for students to obtain higher band scores on the final task, some students showed less improvement than others and one or two received lower scores for some traits on the final task. Classifying the change for each of the traits between the initial and final tasks for each student, there were 260 positive changes, 86 showing no change, and 4 that went down. One student had three negative changes between the initial and final tasks and a second student accounted for the fourth negative. In addition, three other students showed no change between any of the traits on the initial and final tasks. The other instances of zero change appeared to be distributed with no discemible pattern. Twenty-three students achieved a positive change in all of the seven traits.
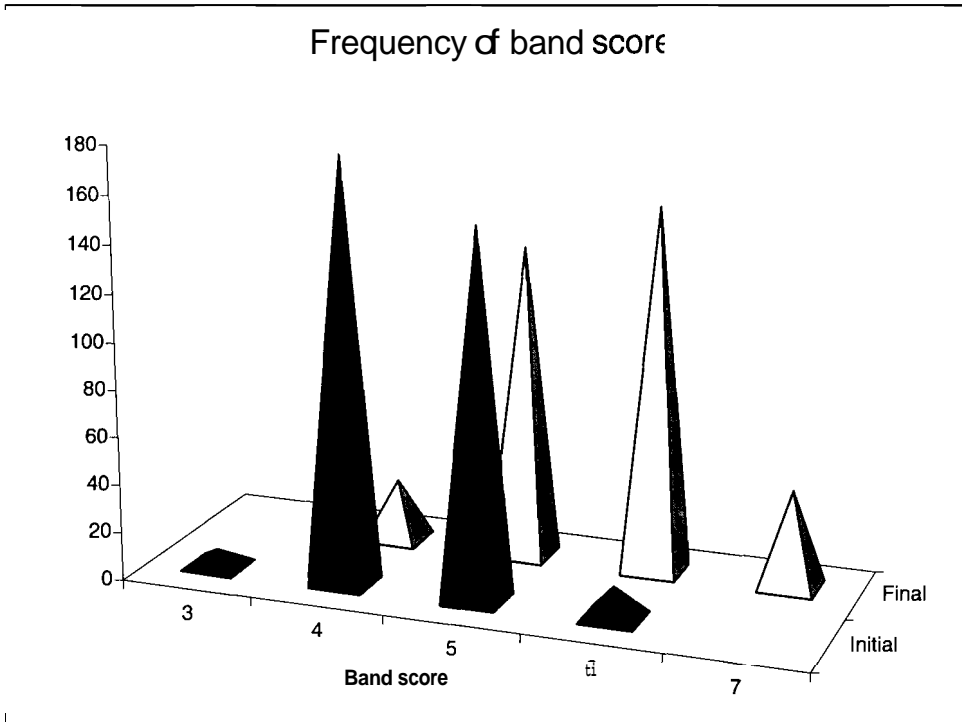
Figure 3: The relative frequency of occurrence of each of the band scores on all traits combined on the initial and final tasks

IV.4. Comparison of Traits

Although the increase in band score between the initial and final task for all of the traits was significant, it is clear that this does not mean that the change for each trait was the same. The greatest increase was in Organization which improved an average of 1.48 bands. The increase for Communicative Quality was the smallest at an average of 0.84 bands. The mean change in score for each of the traits between the initial and final tasks can be seen in Figure 4.
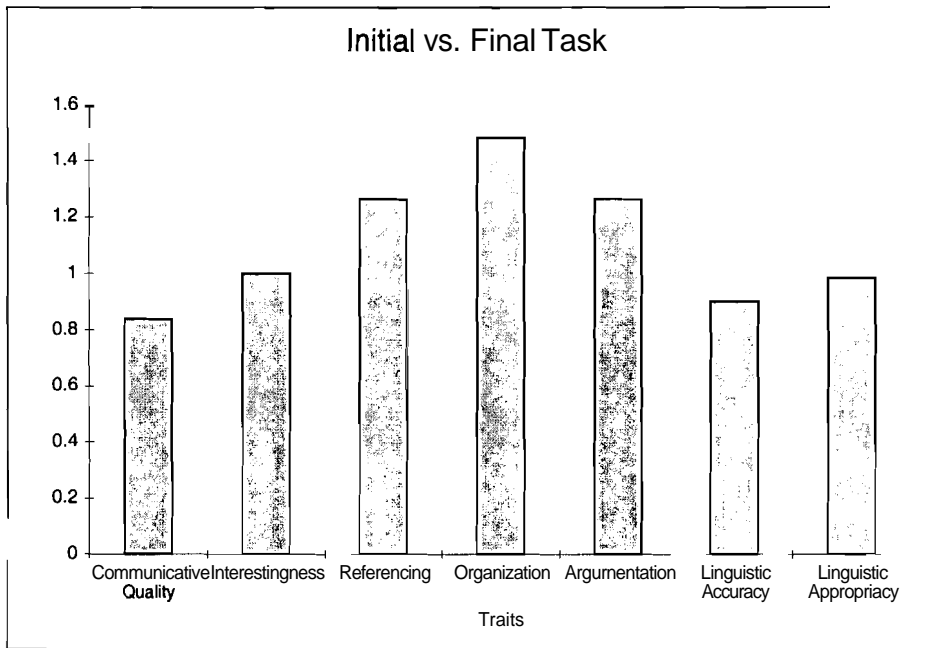
Figure 4: The differences i n mean band score for each trait between the initial and final tasks

If those traits that are broadly related are combined, a comparison can be made of the relative change over the period of study in language related (Linguistic Accuracy and Linguistic Appropriacy) and discourse related (Referencing, Organization, and Argumentation) traits. The mean band scores for these combinations are given in Table 2.

Combined Traits	Mean initial band score	Mean final band score	Change
Language Traits	4.5	5.44	0.94
Discourse Traits	4.35	5.69	1.33

Table 2: The mean band scores for the initial and final tasks for the combined
groups of traits relating to language (Linguistic Accuracy and Linguistic
Appropriacy) and discourse (Referencing, **Organization,** and Argumentation)

A 2 **x** 2 ANOVA (time **x** trait) showed the difference between the band scores given for the language and discourse traits on the initial task was not statistically significant. The same was true for the band scores for the language and discourse traits on the final task. However, between the initial and final tasks, there was a statistically significant difference (f=113.74,

df=1,49, *p*<.05). The change in band scores on the discourse traits compared with those on the language traits was also statistically significant (*f*=28.46, *df*=1,49, *p*<.05). This greater increase in scores on these traits can be seen in Figure 4.

V. DISCUSSION

The statistically significant variance in the band scores for traits within the initial task suggests that the students' writing displayed strengths and weaknesses that were close enough to the traits in the rubric to be picked up differentially by the multiple-trait scoring scheme. Scores on the final task displayed a similar degree of variance, but with different traits contributing to the high and low band scores.

The two lowest scoring traits on the initial task, Organization and Argumentation, are perhaps the two most genre specific (and socially constmcted) areas of the scoring rubric. They are areas that are most likely to differ because of the application of different L1 cultural norms to the tasks (Clyne, 1987; Connor, 1996; Hinds, 1987; Mohan & Lo, 1985; Ostler, 1987) and that are less likely to be successfully managed if the writers are stmggling with their knowledge of the stmcture of the target language (Bardovi-Harlig, 1995; Cumming, 1989). They are also areas that are generally seen as important in academic writing (Bridgeman & Carslon, 1983; Hamp-Lyons, 1991). Communicative Quality and Interestingness score the highest on the initial task. This is perhaps a reflection of the students' overall proficiency in English—their ability to express themselves through English and to demonstrate the use of a variety of stmctures and a depth of vocabulary. These results fit the general pattem of language proficiency to be expected of students on the eight-week pre-sessional courses. Students at the entry level for the programme (IELTS 5.5, TOEFL 530, or equivalent) generally demonstrate an adequate, cornrnunicative use of general English but with certain inaccuracies of use and usage and a lack of familiarity with British academic norms of information stmcturing and argumentation.

On the final task, Organization scored the highest overall. This reflects a degree of acculturation to British academic norms and presumably also a better understanding of the expectations of the task (although the final test did not form a major part of the students' overall grade for the pre-sessional programme, so there should have been little washback from this task).

The difference between band scores for the traits on the initial task and those on the final task represent a clear difference in the writing of the 'typical' student between the start and the end of their course. This difference represents an overall average increase of just over one band for all of the traits combined. Individually, 45 of the students managed to increase their mean overall score over the two tasks. However, although increase and, by definition, improvement was the norm, 27 students failed to improve their band score in at least one of the seven traits; three showed no improvement in any trait; and two actually recorded lower scores on at least one trait on the final task. At the other end of the scale, six students posted average overall increases

of two bands or more and the most improved student actually increased by three bands on each of the seven traits.

Individual differences between students aside, it is clear both statistically and visually (from Figure 4) that it is in Referencing, Organization, and Argumentation that the greatest increase on the final task was recorded. In both Organization and Referencing, the modal increase between the initial and final task scores was two bands. All the other traits had a modal increase of one band.

These three traits represent a type of knowledge rooted in the cultural norms of the British academic community, as represented by the pre-sessional language programme. Progress in these areas can be attributed as much to a process of acculturation — learning to apply a different perspective to the task at hand — as to learning new forms and uses of language. This particular area of competence is the one that is given most prominence in the class activities, assignments, and assessment on the pre-sessional programme.

Most of the studies reported earlier have dealt with whether or not the particular type of instructional intervention had a measurable effect on the students' writing overall (cf. Cresswell, 2000; Ferris, 1997; Sengupta, 2000; Tsang & Wong, 2000; Villamil & de Guerreo, 1998). The results of this study differ from these previous studies in that they suggest that not only does instruction in writing have an overall effect on the quality of student writing, but that the focus of activities also affects the areas in which change occurs in student writing.

This differential progress shown by the students across the traits supports empirically the claim that writing is a multidimensional and complex skill. A holistic score given to a student on a writing test will reflect, at a certain level, that student's ability to produce an effective text. However, it may mask more than it shows (Hamp-Lyons, 1995). Students bring to the task their own levels of knowledge and ability concerning process, strategies, topic, culture, and the formal and discourse structures of the target language. These may differ from one another in ways that vary depending on the cognitive demands of the task at hand. This interaction has been shown in the present study in the ways in which the traits differed from and were related to one another. That change in writing is not necessarily equal change in the whole was also shown by the different amounts of progress recorded over the different traits scored.

VI. IMPLICATIONS FOR INSTRUCTION

Recent attempts to model the writing process have recognised its complexity. Grabe (2001), in discussing categorising conditions on learning to write, produced a list of 12 categories of conditions for second language leaming that apply to a writing context (adapted from Spolsky, 1989). These categories can be used to generate useful generalising conditions about learning to write. Grabe suggests that such a conditions approach to modelling L2 writing may be "a good way to establish a large set of facts about L2 writing that will need to be accounted for" (page

54). He further suggests that this can then be used as a basis for developing a distinct model of L2 writing. Cumming and Riazi (2000) take a similar approach in discussing the conditions that must be met before an effective model of L2 writing instruction can be produced. They found in their students' writing "complex configurations of background and process variables that interrelate students' previous educational experiences and present practices leaming to write in a second language" (page 68).

Approaches to the teaching of writing in L2 contexts over the past 30 years that have focused on form, on the writer, on content and on the reader (Raimes, 1991) or more recent approaches that have focused on genre and on 'critical' approaches to writing pedagogy (Raimes, 1998) reflect an understanding that writing is a complex act and that the proficiencies to be developed by the novice writer can be viewed from a number of directions.

Assessment also recognises that student writing can have different strengths and weaknesses. Primary and multiple-trait scoring of compositions explicitly recognises that writing proficiency is not just one thing.

Writing is too complex an activity to be effectively and comprehensively taught using a single approach. A key element in the choice of instructional activities for a writing programme should be the purpose the students have in taking the course in the first place. An analysis of student needs and purposes (either formal or informal) can highlight those areas of proficiency that can become the focus of the course. The results of this study show that: student writing does not present a consistent profile of proficiencies but varies across traits; instruction in writing has a positive effect on the quality of student writing; and focusing teaching activities on aspects of writing can effectively change the balance of the student's overall profile.

The pre-sessional prograrnme used as the basis for this study focuses on an area of proficiency that is perceived as being of particular importance to the students taking the course. It has been shown that this focus of instruction is effective in helping the students to make progress in this area.

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Appendix 1: The Experimental Communicative Profile Scale

	Communicative Quality	Interestingness	Referencing	Organization	Argumentation	Linguistic Accuracy	Linguistic Appropriacy
9	The writing displays an ability to communicate in a way that gives the reader full satisfaction.	The writing shows high creativity and novelty, fully engrossing the reader.	The writing shows abundant use of illustrations and examples displaying cultural awareness.	The witing displayr completely logical organization structure, enabling the message to be followed effortlessly	Relevant arguments are presented in an interesting way, with main ideas prominently and clearly stated, with complete effective supporting material; arguments are effectively related to the witer's experience or views.	The reader sees no erron of vocabulary, spelling, punctuatión, or grammar.	There is an ability to manipulate the linguistic system with complete appropnacy.
8	The writing displays an ability to comunicate without causing the reader any difficulties.	The writing shows novelty and creativity, sustaining interest throughout.	The witing makes frequent use of examples suited to the reader.	The writing displays a logical organization structure that enables the message to be followed easily.	Relevant aryments are presented in an interesting way. with main ideas highlighted, effective supporting material and they are well related to the writer's own experience of view.	The reader sees no significant errors of vocabulary, punctuation, or grammar.	There is an ability to manipulate the linguistic systems appropriately.
7	The writing displays an ability to communicate with few difficulties for the reader.	The writing has frequent novel ideas that evoke reader interest and attention.	The writing offers many ___ are suitable for most readers.	The writing displays good organizational structure that enables the message to be followed throughout.	Arguments are well presented with relevant ___ ti___ material and an attempt to relate them to the writer's experience or views.	The reader is aware of but not troubled b. occasional errors of vocabulary, spelling, punctuation, or grammar.	There are minor limitations to rhe ability to manipulate the linguistic systems appmpnately which do not intrude on the reader.'
6	writing displays ___ ___ly to communicate although there is occasional strain for the reader.	occasionally ___ ideas that attract reader attention.	The witing makes use of examples although the particular examples used may not be culturally appropriate	The writing ir organized well enough for the message to be followed throughout.	Aryments are presented, but it may be difficult for the reader to distinguish matn ideas from supponing material, main ideas may not be supported; their relevance may be dubious; arguments may not be related to the witer's experience or views.	The reader is aware of errors of vocabulary, spelling, or grammar— but only cccasionally.	There is limited ability to manipulate the linguistic systems appropriately, but this intrudes only occasionally.
5	The writing displays an ability to communicate although there is often strain for the reader	The writing occasionally provides new information but little of it is interesting	The writing makes infrequent use of explanations or examples.	The writing is organized well enough for the message to be followed most of the time.	Aryments are presented but may lack relemce clarity, consistency. or support; they may not be related to the writer's experience or views	The reader is aware of errors of vocabulary, spelling, punctuation, or grammar that intrude frequently.	There is limited ability to manipulate the linguistic systems appropriately which intrudes frequently.
4	The writing shows a limited ability to comunicale. which puts a strain on the reader throughout.	The writing is routine in the major part of its content with little new information.	The writing contains fragmented examples or allusions that assist few rcaden.	The witing lacks a clear organizational structure and the message is difficult to follow.	Aryments are inadequately presented and supported; they may be irrelevant; if the writer's experience or views are presented, their relevance may be difficult lo see.	The reader finds the control of vocabulary, spelling, punctuation, and grammar inadequate.	There is inability lo manipulate the linguistic systems appropriately, which causes severe strain for the reader.
3	The witing does not display an ability to communicate although meaning comes through spasmodically.	The witing is dull and uninteresting for most readen	The writing prondes no examples suitable for the reader	The writing has no discernible organizational structure, and a message cannot be followed.	Some elements of infonnation are presented, but the reader is not provided with an argument, or the argument is mainly irrelevant	The rcader is aware primarily of gross inadequacies of vocabulary, spelling, punctuation, and grammar.	There ir little or no sense of linguistic appropriacy, although there ir evidence of sentence structure
2	The writing displays no ability to comunicate	The writing is completely void of interesting content.	The writing provides no examples whatever.	N o organizational structure or message is recognizable.	A meaning comes through occasionally, but it is not relevant.	The reader sees no endence of control o f vocabulary, spelling, punctuation, or grammar.	There ir no sense of linguistic appropriacy.
1	A true non writer who has not produced any assessable strings o f English writing. An answer that is wholly or almost wholly copied from the input text or task is in this category.						
0	This rating should be used only when a candidate did not attend or attempt this part o f the test in any way.						

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† The band 7 descriptor for linguistic appropriacy given in Hamp-Lyons and Henning (1991) is a repetition o f Band 6. This version is taken from Hamp-Lyons, 1991

Appendix 2: Sample initial and final tasks from one student

Initial task

The first car appeared on British roads in 1888. By the year 2000 there may be as many as 29 million vehicles on British Roads. Should alternative forms of transport be encouraged and international laws introduced to control car ownership and use?

There is no denying that car plays an important role in modern world. It provides convenience to people and make us easier to access to what we want. However, it also brings some problems such as traffic jam, car accidence and green house effect to people.

We're going to just live in a small area and seldom get out of the town without a car. For travelling, working, shopping and so on, using a car can be vety convenient and save much time. How can we Iive without a car?

However, some people might say that too many cars will cause traflcjam, and inproper parking will spoil the scene of city and make traffic worse. Moreover, it causes green house effect to damage our earth. Therefore, we should encourage public transportation and discourage the ownership and use of cars.

I agree with the policy towards the control over ownership and use of cars. For a long distance travel, we can take airplanes; for shopping or working, we can take public transportaiion. It is quicker and convenient as you are using your own car. On the other hand, the responsibility of protecting the earth should be shared by wetyone in the world. Reducing the usage of cars can be a good way to prevent green house effect.

Final task

The threat of nuclear weapons maintains world peace. Nuclear power provides cheap and clean energv. Do the benefits of nuclear technology outweigh the disadvantages?

The development of the nuclear technologv has been the main concern. Nuclear power provides cheaper and cleaner to help people solve the problem with energv crisis. On the other hand, nuclear weapon maintains world peace. Howwer, it also threatens the environrnent and people if any countty use nuclear weapon in the war or any emission happen.

It is widely accepted that nuclear weapon has helped to maintain worldpeace and also provided cheap and clean energv to people. Not evety countty and people in the world like to be peaceful. In other words, some might be very aggressive. Moreover, the allocation of resources might be uneven. This causes some international quarrels and wars. To prevent some countty being too aggressive, United nations and the world's leading countty – United states have held responsible for developing nuclear weapon to threaten them. On the other hand, nuclear helpes to solve the energv crisis by providing a cheap and clean way.

However, nuclear might cause serious damage to people if someone uses nuclear weapon or handles it carelessly. For example, Japan had suffered terrible damage in the worldwar Il. After American threw two nuclear bombs in Japan, the environrnent in the area destroyed badly and the serious disease happened to the people for many decades. The truth is that nuclear causes damage to people and we have to be vety cautious.

The benefits of nuclear technologv outweigh the disadvantage. We need nuclear power to save the energv crisis as well as the threaten of nuclear weapons maintains worldpeace. Moreover, people are careful with usage of nuclear weapon. That should be able to prevent the damage.