8 Integrating Writing Assignments at an American Branch Campus in Qatar: Challenges, Adaptations, and Recommendations

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Recently, many western institutions have established international branch campuses (IBCs) in many parts of the MENA region. However, to be successful, IBCs must adapt to the needs of the context in which they operate. This chapter investigates challenges and adaptations in integrating academic writing across the curriculum at a branch campus of an American university in Qatar. Interviews with 65 faculty across disciplines highlight faculty perceptions of students' challenges with writing, and adaptations faculty make in response. Based on their findings, the authors make recommendations for adapting writing instruction for English-medium universities in the Middle East, especially at IBCs.

Keywords: international branch campus; transnational education; curriculum adaptation; academic writing; faculty perspectives

Western Universities Going Global[1]

In today's increasingly globalized world, a recent trend in higher education has been the establishment of branch campuses of western universities worldwide. These campuses are beneficial to western universities as a means of gaining international recognition and additional revenue, and to the host country in preparing graduates to compete in today's highly competitive

knowledge-based global market (Wilkins & Huisman, 2012). In particular, a number of Middle East nations have invited western universities to establish branch campuses. Worldwide, over 240 international branch campuses (IBCs) have been established, with approximately one third of these located in the MENA region (C-BERT, 2014; Miller-Idriss & Hanauer, 2011). Although English often has no official status in the host country, the vast majority of these branch campuses use English as the medium of instruction (Wilson & Urbanovic, 2014; see also the other chapters in this volume).

An important issue for these branch campuses is how to adapt to the institutional structures, expectations, and needs of the host country (Wilkins & Huisman, 2012). Scholars as well as national and international bodies have recommended that IBCs make adaptations that take the local context into account, while also delivering a quality of education that parallels the home institution (e.g., Smith, 2010; UNESCO/OECD, 2005). These simultaneous and sometimes competing demands can present challenges for faculty and students (Shams & Huisman, 2011).

Academic language, particularly in writing, has been found to be especially challenging for students at English-medium universities because much of the focus of learning is on content knowledge rather than on the language through which that content is learned (Doiz, Lasagabaster, & Sierra, 2013; Evans & Morrison, 2011; Sonleitner & Khelifa, 2005).

In this chapter, we investigate challenges that students and faculty encounter in integrating writing assignments across the curriculum at an international branch campus of an American university in the Middle East. We begin, however, with a general background on IBCs to highlight some of the issues and challenges of teaching at international branch campuses that have been found in previous research. We then describe the study from which we draw our data, a four-year longitudinal study of literacy at a branch campus of an American university in Qatar, and the specific data that we focus on in this chapter, interviews with faculty at this campus. Our results illustrate a number of faculty perceptions of student challenges, faculty challenges with integrating writing assignments into their curricula, and adaptations that faculty make as a result of these challenges. Lastly, we make recommendations for integrating writing assignments at international branch campuses, specifically those in the Middle East (see also Hodges & Kent; Rudd & Telafici, this volume, for related discussion of student writing and writing assignments at IBCs).

International Branch Campuses

In recent years, higher education has become increasingly international; not

only are more and more students studying abroad, but universities themselves are also expanding overseas through the establishment of IBCs. IBCs are satellite campuses established by educational institutions in a source country to deliver its educational programs in a host country (Naidoo, 2009). Although IBCs are not a new phenomenon—the University of London set up degree-granting programs at colleges outside of the UK in 1858 (Lane & Kinser, 2014)—the prevalence of IBCs has increased dramatically in the last 15 years due to changes in policies in many countries aimed specifically at attracting IBCs (Lane, 2011). Of the over 240 IBCs currently operating, the most prevalent source countries are the US, Australia, and the UK (Becker, 2009), and the Middle East is host to nearly one third of IBCs worldwide (Miller-Idriss & Hanauer, 2011). Despite their increasing prevalence, little research exists on IBCs in general (Altbach, 2007), let alone in the MENA region.

IBCs can be beneficial to the source institution as a way to gain international recognition and can benefit the host country by preparing graduates to work in increasingly knowledge-based developing economies (Wilkins & Huisman, 2012). In Qatar, the government is well aware that the nation's gas reserves will not last forever and has invested in IBCs as part of its effort to develop human capital, as outlined in the 2030 National Vision (General Secretariat for Development Planning, 2008).

Although many IBCs enjoy favorable economic conditions, with the cost of building construction and many other operational costs being shouldered by local partner organizations or governments (Becker, 2009; McBurnie & Ziguras, 2007), IBCs, often new, lack many of the human, material, and knowledge resources that have been built up over decades or centuries at the institution's main campus, making it more difficult to implement successful curricula at an IBC (Armstrong, 2007). IBCs have also been criticized because they could divert resources away from the source institution's main campus (Wilkins & Huisman, 2012) and because of concerns of academic freedom in some host countries (Wilhelm, 2011). In addition, some research has found instances of lowered quality of education at IBCs (Poon-McBrayer, 2011; Wilkinson & Yussof, 2005). Comparisons between main campuses and IBCs routinely question whether IBCs perform at a high enough level, and some have questioned the feasibility of conducting high-quality academic programs away from an institution's main campus (Dobos, 2011; O'Neill, 2012).

At many IBCs, quality is controlled by having faculty from the source institution's main campus develop curricula and syllabi, which are then delivered by faculty at the IBC (Dobos, 2011; Pyvis, 2011). However, this can be problematic, as there are often substantial differences between the context of the main campus and the IBC, necessitating appropriate adaptation

and contextualization. Although international and national bodies, such as UNESCO and the New England Association for Schools and Colleges (NEASC), recommend that IBCs provide the same quality of education as at the source institution's main campus, they do not specify that curricula be identical (Smith, 2010), with the NEASC's guidelines specifying that "where possible and appropriate [curricula should be] adapted to the culture of the host country, while reflecting American educational values and practices" (as quoted in Smith, 2010, p. 801).

The issue of adaptation at IBCs is hotly contested, both in the literature and in practice. While many agree that adaptation must occur, an important question is to what extent and in what ways to adapt curricula. At IBCs in the Gulf States, staffing and curricula are often adapted to take account of local religion, culture, and values, and to reflect employment demands in the host country (Wilkins & Huisman, 2012). If such adaptations are not made, IBCs could lose credibility with the local community (Shams & Huisman, 2012). In addition, by not adapting, IBCs may risk imposing cultural colonialism through indiscriminate use of home-country ideas, theories, and practices (Wang, 2008). At the same time, if curricula are adapted too much for the overseas market, students at IBCs may find the education unauthentic (Willis, 2004). After all, many students enroll in IBCs in order to receive the same qualification as at the main campus, as well as knowledge about international issues, rather than a purely localized version (Wang, 2008; Zimitat, 2008).

Thus, in their adaptations to curricula and instruction, IBCs often need to find a balance between home and host contexts (Dunn & Wallace, 2004; Smith, 2010; Waterval, Frambach, Driessen, & Scherpbier, 2014; Willis, 2003). Faculty at IBCs often feel pressure to construct curricula that "serve two masters," the source institution and the host country (Dobos, 2011, p. 32). IBCs need to offer curricula that are equivalent to those at the main campus while still taking into account local culture and values, and offer both accessibility to a global job market as well as a design for a local job market (Khondker, 2004; Leask, 2008). To be successful, IBCs must integrate the specific host culture where the university is located in ways that benefit students' future working opportunities (Hoare, 2012; Khondker, 2004; Miliszewska & Sztendur, 2011). By doing so, students are not only better prepared for finding a career after graduation, but learning is improved as students are better able to relate content to their own experiences and social contexts (Ziguras, 2008).

Adaptations at IBCs can take many forms. In order to help students relate to course content, textbooks may need to be altered to increase local relevance, or faculty may need to construct examples that are relevant to the local context (Debowski, 2005; Dunn & Wallace, 2006; Gribble & Ziguras, 2003).

Some research has found that students at IBCs may have learning styles associated with the host culture, and which may differ substantially from students at the university's main campus (Eaves, 2011; Hefferman, Morrison, Basu, & Sweeney, 2010). For example, IBCs may have expectations of student-centered or teacher-centered instruction or processes of questioning or critical thinking that differ from the host culture (Zimitat, 2008). Hefferman, Morrison, Basu, & Sweeney (2010) found that students at an Australian university's IBC in China were more global learners; based on this, they recommend that instructors in that context adapt their instruction by first presenting the "big picture" of a lesson in order to establish the context and relevance of the subject matter before presenting individual steps, describing applications of concepts and "what-if" scenarios, allowing students to generate alternative solutions, and using more group work and guest speakers. To date, however, there has been little research conducted on adaptation of curricula and instruction at IBCs in the Middle East.

Teaching Challenges at IBCs

For faculty, teaching at an IBC can present a number of challenges for which they receive little formal preparation (McBurnie & Ziguras, 2007). In the Gulf region, some of these challenges may be institutional, such as differing ideas of mixed gender classes, shared governance, and academic freedom (Noori & Anderson, 2013). Others may be in terms of classroom management (Crabtree & Sapp, 2004); for example, Sonleitner and Khelifa (2005) note that "western-educated" faculty teaching in the UAE may have implicit expectations that only one person should speak at one time, while their students may feel that it is appropriate for several people to have simultaneous conversations. Faculty at IBCs may face particular challenges due to language issues, as few faculty have knowledge of the local language (McBurnie & Ziguras, 2007), and many students may have additional challenges because they are completing their studies in a second language (Coleman, 2006; Hughes, 2008). Technical and academic language, particularly in writing, can be especially challenging for students at English-medium universities (Evans & Morrison, 2011; Gerson, 2010, cited in Wilkins & Urbanovic, 2014).

In the Middle East, in particular, students often have challenges with English reading and writing. Some researchers have described an emphasis on oral communication over written communication in the Middle East (e.g., Meleis, 1982; Wilkins, 2001), which may result in an imbalance between students' oral and written skills. Due to frustration with students' reading and writing performance, some faculty have reported not being able to cover as

much material as in their home country (Sonleitner & Khelifa, 2005). Although academic reading and writing can be challenging for students in the Middle East, there have been very few reports of faculty experiences with, and responses to, these challenges (see also Hodges & Kent, this volume).

A better understanding of the writing challenges that faculty encounter and the ways that they address these challenges will give us insights into a quickly growing segment of higher education. Much of the existing understanding of second language writing has come from the experiences of second language writers studying at universities in the major Anglophone countries, often in intensive English programs. Ortega (2009, p. 250) points out that "we should take great care to avoid the pitfall of treating teachers, writers, and writing contexts across studies as belonging to an undifferentiated, homogeneous contextual class," and that although labels such as *English as a foreign language* are useful, such labels "should not blind us to the great diversity [they] hide." As more and more universities expand into the Middle East by opening IBCs (and more local universities adopt English as the medium of instruction), it is important to better understand how writing instruction is implemented in these contexts.

The Study

In this study, we examine faculty perceptions about students' challenges with writing at an English-medium branch campus of an American university in Qatar, and whether and how they adapt their teaching as a result of those challenges. Our data are drawn from a larger four-year longitudinal study of academic literacy development at the institution. In the larger study, we followed the class of 2013 at the institution (*N*=85) examining their writing experiences, challenges, and development throughout their four years of college, and also conducting interviews with the faculty who taught them. At the beginning of the study, this IBC had been in Qatar for five years and had a student body of 350 students. At the time, there were three majors offered: business administration (48% of the students), computer science (31%), and information systems (21%). In addition to courses in their major, students took required and elective courses offered in a variety of subjects such as history, psychology, and architecture. In their first year, all students took a two-course sequence in academic reading and writing to help them acclimate to university-level literacy demands.

The students (male 47%, female 53%) are quite linguistically and culturally diverse: 63% consider Arabic, and 14% consider English, one of their native languages, and among the students, seventeen different native languages were

reported. TOEFL and IELTS scores were generally high, with averages of 97 and 6.5, respectively. Most students are from the Gulf region, the greater Middle East, India, Pakistan, or Bangladesh, while a smaller number of students are from North Africa, Europe, or North America. Of the students in the study, 55% attended English-medium secondary schools, 20% both Arabic and English-medium, 10% Arabic-medium, and the remaining 15% in other languages. Approximately 20% of students attended a one-year transitional program in Qatar between high school and university.

While the larger study was multi-faceted and employed a variety of data collection methods (see Pessoa, Miller, & Kaufer, 2014), in this chapter we focus on interviews with faculty with some reference to interviews conducted with students to better contextualize our findings and discussion. In total, one of the authors conducted 60 one-hour semi-structured interviews with faculty members. Most interviews were individual, though some were group interviews with faculty teaching in the same discipline. The interviews were conducted in the authors' or faculty participants' offices. Upon obtaining consent, interviews were audio and video recorded and subsequently transcribed verbatim for analysis. The purpose of the interviews was to obtain an understanding of 1) the literacy demands of the faculty's discipline in general and the specific courses they taught, 2) the faculty's perception about the students' academic strengths and challenges, and 3) the faculty's approaches to address students' needs and potential adaptations to their curriculum (see the appendix for the interview protocol). Because our focus was on the content of the interviews rather than the linguistic or textual features of the discourse, the transcripts were analyzed using thematic analysis, in which transcripts are reviewed recursively to identify themes (Duff, 2008; Richie, Spencer, & O'Connor, 2003).

In total, 75 faculty members taught the students in the larger study, of whom we were able to interview 65. The faculty came from a variety of disciplines, including computer science, business administration, information systems, history, psychology, and English. The majority of the faculty interviewed are male and hold a doctoral degree from the US. Approximately half of the faculty come from the US and speak English as their native language, and the rest come from a variety of countries in the Middle East, North Africa, Europe, and Asia, and speak a variety of languages. In general, they have extensive experience teaching undergraduate students in the US and internationally, with only a few having taught mostly graduate students. More than half have been teaching at this IBC for more than three years with a few having been at the IBC from its inception in 2004. More than half of the faculty have experience teaching in the US, and about half of the faculty have

extensive experience teaching at the institution's main campus in the US.

In the following section, we present the findings of the study, focusing on faculty perceptions of student writing challenges, what the faculty do to address the needs of the students, and adaptations that faculty make to their teaching.

Faculty Perceptions of Student Academic Challenges

Faculty commented on a number of challenges that they perceived that students face, including initial concerns about academic preparedness for university-level writing as well as ongoing challenges with academic reading and writing in terms of a lack of background knowledge, challenges with reading, and difficulties with disciplinary genres.

Many of the faculty talked about initial concerns about students' academic preparedness, especially their work ethic, study skills, priorities, and level of maturity and independence, but also their previous experience with writing. One faculty said that "a lot of the students coming out of the local school system are missing a solid foundation and basic skill set" (Professor H, Spring 2010). In terms of writing, this resonates with some of the students' reports of limited previous experience with writing:

> In high school we only wrote 100 to 250 words in English class. [The teachers] give you the topic. The students write paragraphs for each topic and memorize each paragraph without thinking. (Dima, Fall 2009)

As students progressed through their undergraduate studies, some of these concerns diminished; by the second or third year, the faculty reported that the students worked more independently and took more ownership of and responsibility over their own learning.

Some faculty described students' difficulties with writing as arising from a cultural emphasis on oral rather than written communication. Faculty described students as having stronger oral than written skills, despite the value that writing has for learning:

> For the students here, in some ways they are much better at expressing themselves orally. But writing itself is a way of kind of thinking through something by having to formulate sentences that string one after another, you actually have to think about what you are saying in ways that you don't when you are speaking. (Professor R, Spring 2013)

Professor R pointed out that writing is a much different skill from speaking, and that the act of writing can help students to learn, a perspective that is supported by research on writing-to-learn (see, e.g., Hirvela, 2011; Williams, 2012).

Many of the faculty discussed students' challenges with reading. In many courses, students' writing was based on assigned readings, and so these challenges with reading also directly affected students' writing. According to one history professor, "[many] students have trouble with vocabulary in primary sources" and "students also have trouble understanding the historical context, as it is unfamiliar to them" (Professor B, Fall 2009), indicating that students' difficulty reading source texts was not only linguistic but also due to a lack of background knowledge.

Some faculty who came from the university's main campus commented that students at the IBC read more slowly and were not used to the amount of reading that would typically be assigned at the main campus. Professor M stated that "I came here and . . . I realized they just they read a lot slower than the students [at the main campus]" (Fall 2012). Similarly, Professor K stated, "I think the other thing that I've noticed here compared to students [at the main campus] is the amount of time that it takes them to be able to read and comprehend and formulate a long answer . . . and actually write it out, and so that makes it really difficult." On the main campus, he said, students "have 50 minutes and it's fine" but at the IBC students "don't even get to the last couple of questions" (Spring 2013). The need for more time not only to complete individual exams and assignments, but also additional class time to "catch up" on background knowledge were common issues discussed by the faculty.

Reading challenges and lack of background knowledge made it difficult for students to interpret texts sufficiently in order to write about them. This was particularly challenging in a course that demanded the reading of literary and cultural theory, which was new to many students. Thus, students' coping strategy to understand and write about the texts was to rely heavily on the professor, as explained by Professor E:

> I think these students rock. It's simply that they don't have this experience of talking to anyone . . . about what the texts mean. They, like, look at me . . . and they take notes like crazy . . . I'm the source of wisdom and knowledge. So it's like no textbooks work, nothing really matters to them as much as what I say. So it's how it works here. It's like the oral culture of knowledge . . . [On the main campus] you just give them one idea [and] they do the rest themselves (Spring 2013)

As this professor explains, many of the students in this institution are academically strong, but they have little background in interpreting theory-heavy texts, leading to reading struggles. Furthermore, Professor E relates students' coping strategy of relying on in-class explanations to the oral nature of the local culture, as described earlier.

Some professors commented that students' challenges with reading and writing were related to their wanting to find the right answer rather than, or in addition to, a lack of understanding and appreciation for complexity and application of ideas. In this regard, Professor S commented that:

> [The students] are too busy looking for the "right" answer. Part of what I have to educate them out of is that I am not concerned about "right" answers . . . Some [students answer] yes; some say no; and they both get full credit. And it starts to sink in. Then they can stop looking for the right answer and look for developing a thoughtful and theoretically rounded paper (Fall 2010).

The focus on finding the right answer rather than complexity and application of concepts may also be related to students' focus on memorization. Describing students' pre-college experiences, Professor J commented:

> I think a lot of the curriculum that they come out of in high schools here is very memorization based. It's very based on, you know, not applying those concepts to various situations, but much more regurgitation of the information, and so when you force students in any discipline to do problem solving . . . they really hate that. (Spring 2013)

A number of faculty commented on students' challenges with the types of analysis, application, and critical thinking skills that are expected at the IBC, and attributed these to the focus on memorization and "regurgitation" in students' pre-college education. Another professor related students' focus on finding the right answer in their pre-college education to a lack of motivation to write in college:

> And they went through this schooling where people tell them "this is wrong" and "that is wrong" and "[you] just can't write." They are not writers and they don't love it. If you don't love it you will never get better and you will never become that person who writes. (Professor E, Spring 2013)

Weak reading, analytical, and critical thinking skills, as well as unfamiliarity with the demands and expectations of academic writing, led to challenges in students' meeting their professors' writing expectations. The students' unfamiliarity with academic and professional writing norms was also observed in students' inadequate formatting of papers as well as challenges with rhetorical modes and genres, as commented on by Professor P:

> The letter of application for a job is like a five-paragraph essay. When I teach it on [the main campus], it seems elementary because the students know this structure. But, here, they don't, so students struggle making functional paragraphs for the application letter. Students also have trouble deconstructing business arguments. New product proposals were broken into paragraph-size sections, but they weren't paragraphs—no sense of beginning or end. Business communicators need to be able to break complicated ideas into manageable ones (Spring 2011)

As did other professors, this professor compared his students on the branch campus to those on the main campus, speaking of his concern about the students' unfamiliarity with the five-paragraph essay and the students' ability to effectively construct paragraphs. Although constructing arguments in an organized manner and organizing ideas in manageable, clear paragraphs is something that is heavily discussed in the students' two first-year academic writing courses and in other writing-intensive courses such as history, students struggle applying these concepts to professional and disciplinary writing.

Other faculty also discussed students' challenges with reading and writing as arising from a lack of genre knowledge rather than a lack of linguistic knowledge, such as Professor M who commented that "if you are bouncing from textbooks to technical things to doing research on the web to a Harvard business review article, they have a hard time." "I don't think it's the language issues anymore," she said, "I really think that the genre switching is a bigger problem than the language issues" (Fall 2012). On the main campus, the students may be more familiar with these genres and may be better able to navigate the variety of disciplinary genres they encounter. This genre knowledge also affects writing instruction, as Professor T explained, "You're really not teaching exactly the same genre here that you teach [on the main campus]."

When the genre is unfamiliar to students and the content is more challenging, it is also likely that the students' language abilities and writing skills will break down. For example, when students had to write a literature review

for the first time in a computer science course, Professor D was quite disappointed with the outcome, commenting that:

> In a literature review, [the] writing [was] terrible. Everything was wrong: introducing [the] topic, organizing [the] topic, transitioning between sections, run-on sentences, punctuation, content, incorrect words. Both individual and group assignments were terrible (Spring 2011).

Although Professor D describes students' poor performance in this writing task in terms of organization, grammar, and punctuation, writing a literature review is a complex task that can be daunting for any writer, particularly to second-year undergraduate students with no previous experience with this genre. As a result, when feeling overwhelmed by such a task, students are likely to make mistakes in language and structure.

The faculty described students' challenges with reading and writing as resulting from a number of factors, including students' lack of extensive writing practice during their pre-college education, a cultural emphasis on oral communication, students' tendency toward memorization and retelling of facts rather than analysis and application, and students' lack of background and genre knowledge. Given these challenges, faculty have to make informed decisions about their teaching practices to meet students' needs, which may include adapting their pedagogical practices to the teaching context.

Curricular Adaptations to Meet Students' Needs

As mentioned earlier, some faculty continue teaching at the IBC in the same way as they have at the university's main campus or at other (non-IBC) institutions. They continue to assign the same amount and types of reading and the same writing assignments. Others do away with having a reading and writing-focused course, while others become very strategic about the amount and kinds of scaffolding they provide students to enhance their learning. Holding students at the branch campus to the same standards as the students on the main campus is what drives some of the professors' decisions to keep their requirements the same. However, others argue that by adapting their requirements, they are enhancing student learning.

For example, to reduce the complexity of the writing of business case analyses, Professor S completely did away with having students read business cases in his courses and instead uses television shows and films as cases. Students analyze these visual cases in the form of a written case analysis using the relevant business theories discussed in class. Professor S explains that

with this innovative and motivating teaching practice, he aims to reduce the cognitive demands of the task by using content that is more familiar to students, both in content and modality:

> The television shows lend themselves to discussion. [The students already] watch their favorite American shows and discuss them with their family. They say "did you see Friends last night?" or whatever. [I am] leveraging what they [already] do, which is making compelling content then relatively easy to get people talking about it, laugh and then ground them in the context of the theory. I think . . . talking comes naturally, and then [I frame] the discussion, so that it is more than just descriptive or opinion . . . . I can see the output of it and I am pleased (Fall 2010).

Although this professor may be criticized for not exposing students to authentic, written business cases, he argues that this innovative approach to case analysis makes it more accessible to students, as the vocabulary and background knowledge are more familiar. This, in turn, allows students to focus on in-class discussion and the written case analysis separately from comprehending the case itself.

Instead of eliminating readings entirely, after a year of teaching in Qatar and realizing students' reading challenges, Professor M made strategic decisions to assign less reading and focus more on scaffolding the reading he did assign. Reflecting on this adaptation, Professor M commented:

> It's much more difficult to read in a second or a third language . . . I cut the total pages but I wanted to make sure that the topics were covered. So one thing was I [did not assign] readings that I felt didn't really add that much, and the other was I've worked on a variety of ways to provide guidance to the students when they sit down to read so that they are doing directed reading instead of just kind of reading and pulling out the main topics [on their own] . . .Initially when I started out as a professor I was, "I'm just going to give you a bunch of stuff and you need to figure it out on your own." Eventually that is something that you should develop as a professional, but it's not necessarily fair to expect that from a junior in college, I don't think. (Fall 2012).

Given the positive results of this adaption that Professor M saw at the IBC, he continued these practices when he returned to the main campus, where he

found that the adaptations were equally as effective:

> So I was here for a semester and then I went back to [the main campus], and guess what? I did the same things I did here when I went to [the main campus] and some students liked the readings a lot more and . . . the students were getting more out of the readings. It's just good teaching . . . It required me to change my thinking and approach [away] from "you are an upper class student at [this institution], you should already know how to do this." [to an approach where] if you are not there yet, I need to meet you where you are and show you how to get there. (Fall 2012)

The adaptations that Professor M made as a result of his experiences at the IBC seem not only to be accommodations for a different context with a different student population, but also strategies for scaffolding student learning more generally. He found that although some people might consider adaptations that reduce the amount of work students are assigned to be "watering down" the curriculum, he feels that these adaptations are just examples of good teaching:

> The goal was not to water [the curriculum] down at all. The goal was [to] think thoughtfully . . . I could get away with being sloppy on the [main] campus in a way that I couldn't here. . . . And I give these directions and these guidelines and this scaffolding, and a number of people on the main campus when I tell them that [say] "you are watering down the education." And the reality is that I'm really not. To the contrary, it's making me be a better teacher. (Fall 2012)

"Watering down" the curriculum is a common concern at IBCs, who want to hold the students to the same standards as the students on the main campus. However, what we see from Professor M is that adaptations that need to be made in an IBC are not necessarily decreasing the standards but can be considered a fine-tuning of curriculum and pedagogy.

Like Professor M, a number of faculty discussed scaffolding. When it comes to writing, as with reading, one way to help students meet the expectations of professors, the program, and the university is to offer appropriate scaffolding for students, as many professors in this institution do. For example, the two first-year English courses include multiple-draft writing with extensive written feedback from the professors as well as individual conferences with the students for each paper. In courses in the students' majors, the

students are also encouraged to submit drafts for which they obtain written feedback from their professors. Students are also encouraged to visit the writing center to get help with their linguistic choices to strengthen their ideas and make them clearer for the final version of an assignment.

Perhaps the most scaffolding that students receive in courses in their major comes from Professor X who carefully guides students in the writing of case analysis assignments, from helping students comprehend the case to providing samples and guiding questions for students to effectively write a case analysis, as explained by the professor:

> The biggest obstacle our students have is that . . . most of them are not able to read a five-page case description and understand it. So, essentially, . . . I am reading with them. I am being like a parent reading with a kid. They need that . . . . What I do is I take the case and I show them how to read the case, and that helps because they do not know how to read the case . . . I highlight and I say "hey see this sentence, interesting sentence. This is how you should do it." (Fall 2013).

Clearly, providing this amount of scaffolding requires a great deal of commitment, effort and time by the faculty, and the recognition that this amount of guiding and scaffolding will eventually pay off in the end. Not all professors are willing to put in this effort and not all can, given the amount of material that needs to be covered in a course and the time constraints of the semester. Recognizing that his students needed the extra help, this professor offers extra sessions outside of class time to scaffold students' reading and writing. Although the students indicate that they find his help valuable, according to Professor X, he feels that students do not take full advantage of it. While most students come to the extra session he offers, many fail to start their assignments early enough to be able to obtain feedback from the professor on early drafts, resulting in writing assignments with various flaws.

Providing scaffolding and additional help may not always be productive if students do not take advantage of what is offered. Recognizing the weaknesses in student writing, some faculty continue to have the same requirements and demands, but change their expectations in terms of language. For example, Professor C commented that:

> In short answer writing, I look to make sure the concepts are there, not necessarily how they are connected on the paper [linguistically]. [On the main campus], I graded down for grammar more, as I felt that it showed a lack of precision, but

> I don't do this here because otherwise most students would
> get low grades. (Fall 2011)

Like this professor, other professors tend to focus on the "concepts" and ideas in students' texts, with less focus on how the ideas are connected linguistically, and without holding students as responsible for writing coherent, organized responses in standard English as they might do on the main campus.

Similar to changing language expectations, some professors give value to the varieties of World Englishes used by students, and become more tolerant of the influence of the students' mother tongues in their writing. While some professors push their Arabic-speaking students to be more direct in their writing and do away with the indirect and "flowery" (Professor W, Spring 2012) language valued in Arabic (see also Hall, 1976), some professors are concerned with the imperialistic overtone of such demands, as explained by Professor S:

> I'm reading something [a student] wrote, and I said, "[student's name], I don't understand what this means. This sounds to me like it's a translation in your mind from Arabic to English." She said, "Oh, yeah, that's what it is. This is what we say in Arabic." And for me, I had to stop for a second and [think], you form your identity by this language. And here I'm saying, "No, this is wrong." What kind of ramifications does it have? How imperialist must I sound at the moment to this poor student? (Spring 2010).

While Professor S struggles with having his students write academic texts that meet the expectations of writing in the American academy without being imperialistic in his demands, he, like others, finds ways to communicate his expectations while still valuing students' mother tongues.

While some professors provided support for student writing by offering scaffolding or adaptations to writing assignments, given students' writing challenges, other professors decided to assign less writing. When we asked faculty about their writing practices in their courses, some faculty described feeling limited in their ability to help students with writing. Professor N stated that writing is "not something I feel I should teach" because it "isn't my job" (Spring 2013). As a result, some faculty focused less on writing in their courses, and some assigned no writing at all, as explained by Professor G:

> [Now,] I use only short readings and reporting on quizzes
> because many very bright students have difficulty expressing

themselves in English. I'm not so concerned with writing, though . . . I have them write only a sentence or two. I don't assign essays demanding full paragraphs. I taught in [a country in Asia], where there were lots of [Asian language]-speaking students. Months or years would go by before I saw a full paragraph produced by any of [the students]. Students [here] have many grammatical errors, limited vocabulary, have trouble with subtle nuances. I don't think that students necessarily have to be good at expository writing. (Spring 2012)

Instead of offering more opportunities and appropriate scaffolding for students to practice their writing, this professor has his students do minimal writing, as he feels the students are not good at writing effective and clear paragraphs with accurate grammar, something he claims is not so important for business students who will likely write reports which will then be edited by a professional business or technical writer.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The results reported above lead to a number of conclusions and recommendations for teaching writing at IBCs. In addition, given the rapid increase of IBCs and other English-medium institutions across the MENA region, as well the perception that oral rather than written communication may have greater cultural emphasis in this region, we note that many of our conclusions and recommendations may be applicable to writing instruction in the MENA region in general.

We first suggest that minimizing reading and writing requirements or doing away with them completely, as some faculty in the present study reported doing, are not optimal solutions. Doing so may be detrimental to student learning and development because it limits students' exposure to academic literacies. Academic literacy development is a difficult task that takes many years and requires practice, instruction, and imitation (Sommers, 2008). Reading and writing disciplinary genres is an important part of becoming a full-fledged member of a discipline (Canagarajah, 2002; Duff, 2001; Johns, 1997), and limiting students' opportunities to developing their academic literacy skills to only English or humanities does not give students the opportunity to practice the disciplinary genres that they will likely encounter after they graduate.

Adapting reading and writing assignments to the context does not "water down" the curriculum, and such adaptations can enrich and improve teaching and learning, as Professor M points out when he says that the adaptations he

made in his teaching at this IBC forced him to "be a better teacher."

Because of the benefits for students and teachers, we advocate for a focus on writing and reading across the curriculum, with learning scaffolded to enhance students' literacy skills. While we recognize that scaffolding student learning, particularly in writing, is not an easy task and requires commitment, time, and effort as well as a clear understanding of the writing demands of a discipline in order to make them explicit to students, we have found that there are committed teachers at this IBC who understand the importance of helping students develop their academic literacy skills, such as Professor X, who offers optional extra sessions outside of class time. However, a number of faculty in our study noted that because students at the IBC required additional time to complete readings or complete assignments, more class time would be useful to help students acquire the background knowledge that might be lacking. More time may mean extending the four-year curriculum to a five-year curriculum, giving students more time to complete exams, or having enough time in a course to properly scaffold student learning by, for example, having fewer students in each class, or dividing a course into two semesters that might typically be taught in one. Having enough time to focus on individual students and make certain writing practices standard, such as multiple draft writing (which occurred in English courses, but few other courses in the present study), is likely to enhance student writing.

While faculty may have the motivation and commitment to help students develop their writing skills, some may not have the knowledge or tools to teach writing, and some might feel, as Professor N did, that teaching writing "isn't my job." However, we argue that teachers who assign writing in their courses are, to an extent, responsible for making sure students understand how to write those assignments. Thus, we recommend that professors who embark on the journey of teaching at a branch campus abroad are equipped with the fundamental skills needed to teach writing (and reading) to linguistically and culturally diverse students. This can be done by engaging in faculty development around these and other teaching practices through collaborations with English faculty and other learning and writing specialists who can help faculty deconstruct sample texts in their fields so that faculty can better understand and make more explicit to students the features of disciplinary genres as well as faculty's expectations of writing (see, for example, the Teaching and Learning Cycle: Humphrey & Hao, 2013; Mahboob & Devrim, 2013; Martin & Rose, 2005; Rothery, 1994). Faculty development around teaching with writing is especially important, given that students' lack of familiarity with specific genres was brought up often by our study participants in terms of challenges students had with reading and writing but was seldom mentioned in terms of strategies that faculty have for

addressing students' difficulties.

Our current work on this branch campus is moving us toward more explicit instruction of disciplinary genres. Our four-year longitudinal study of academic writing development has allowed us to understand the writing demands of various disciplines and analyze how students met those demands and expectations longitudinally and what challenges they have. Now we are in a position to work together with the faculty to help them better understand the writing expectations of their discipline and of the genres they assign. We hope that, as a result, faculty across the curriculum will be better able to design writing assignments and develop the tools to make their expectations explicit to students, enhancing both the teaching and learning of writing.

As a part of our advocacy of faculty across the curriculum playing an important role in students' writing development, we also urge faculty to hold students to high standards while being reasonable about their expectations for students who are still developing academic literacies. In our data, we saw that some faculty reduce their expectations of students in terms of writing and language use. From interviews with students, we also found that students quickly learn what the expectations of different professors are: when the expectations are low, students tend to be less careful about their work, and when expectations are high, students tend to be more careful. While we believe that a focus on content is important and that faculty should recognize the challenges of writing in a second language, we also feel that completely disregarding attention to language is not an appropriate solution. Doing so may lead students to think that linguistic accuracy is not important, and as the findings of our study indicate, holding students accountable for both the content and accuracy of their written work will contribute to their development as writers and English language users in their courses across the curriculum and beyond.

Note

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Appendix: Faculty Interview Protocol

Background & Discipline

1. Please tell me about your background and how you ended up here.
2. Please describe your discipline. What do [business administration, computer science, or information systems] experts do?
3. What is the role of language (reading, writing, jargon) in your discipline?
4. How important is it to be a good communicator in your discipline?

The Course(s) Taught

5. Please describe the course(s) you teach to the class of 2013 this semes-

ter. What are the objectives and outcomes of the course(s)?

Perception of Students

6. What is your general impression of these students?
7. How are the students doing in your course(s)? To what extent are they meeting your expectations?
8. How prepared or unprepared do you find these students? What are their major strengths and challenges?
9. What factors contribute to your students' success in your class? What do successful students in your class do?

Reading in Your Course(s)

10. What is the role of reading in your course(s)? Are there required reading materials? Do students have to read course material before class and show their understanding?
11. To what students do you know if students do the reading? Do you check if students completed the reading? And if so how?
12. To what extent do your students show an adequate understanding of the reading material?
13. How would you rate your students' reading abilities?
14. Do you do anything in particular to help your students with their understanding of the reading material?
15. Do you know come to you for help with the reading materials? Do you know if they seek help from our resources such as teaching assistant, the Academic Resource Center, or friends?

Writing in Your Course(s)

16. What is the role of writing in your course(s)? Do you have writing assignments in your course(s)? If so, what kinds of writing assignments? Do students submit work individually or in groups?
17. Why do you have students write in your course(s)?
18. How do you prepare students for your assignments? Written guidelines, explanation in class, draft writing, written feedback, sample papers, revisions based on feedback?
19. If you provide written feedback on student writing, what do you focus on?
20. How do you grade your students writing? Is there anything you focus on the most?
21. What are the qualities of an A written product in your course(s)?
22. How do your students perform in the writing assignments? What are

their strengths and weaknesses?

23. To what extent do you see improvement from draft to draft, from assignment to assignment?

24. Do your students come to you for help with their writing assignments? Do you know if they also use other resources such as teaching assistants, the academic resource center, friends?

Teaching Adaptations

25. Since you have come here, have you made any changes to the way you teach to address the needs and interest of the students here? If so, what have you done?

26. How effective to student learning are your adaptations?

27. Do you see any drawbacks with these changes you have made?