Teaching Academic Writing in the Gulf

Academic Writing as part of foundation programs and first-year curricula in higher education evolved in the Arabian Gulf in the second half of the twentieth century. It was part of a sudden adoption of the Western model of higher education initiated by the discovery of oil and the interest of the Gulf countries in education and spreading literacy among its citizens. The present study provides a survey that aims to highlight the different structures of writing programs across the Arabian Gulf. The study highlights the courses taught, their sequence, course descriptions, and assessment tools in three Gulf countries: Kuwait, Qatar, and Oman. The study aims to frame how educators in the Gulf region adapt transnational scholarship to suit their contexts, where the predominant population is ESL writers with varying degrees of fluency.

1. Institutional Description:

I am an associate professor at the American University of Kuwait. The American University is a small liberal arts institution established in 2003. Dartmouth College in Hanover, New Hampshire, is the international partner institution to the AUK. Dartmouth and AUK collaborate on numerous programs, and Dartmouth provides a wide range of administrative and academic consulting services to AUK. The AUK writing courses are housed under the English Department and are part of GenEd courses. These courses are prerequisites for other classes in different majors.

My involvement with writing courses started in 2010 when I taught first-level college writing as an adjunct instructor. I was later hired as a full-time faculty member, and in 2018, I served as the writing program coordinator for a year before being appointed the English department chair. Writing courses are taught and developed by English faculty, representing approximately 70% of our teaching load.

2. Key Theorists:

Inspired by the Writing Programs Worldwide project that surveys different writing programs in many places, I wanted to develop profiles for the Gulf countries. Of the six GCC, the UAE is the only country represented, although all other countries have writing programs established more than two decades ago. Thaiss, Bräuer, Carlino, Ganobcsik-Williams, & Sinha (2012) celebrate the variety of Writing in different parts of the world and provide profiles for more than thirty writing programs. Yet, in some cases, such comprehensive coverage lacks the depth to distinguish challenges common in a particular context. These challenges define such context and impose the adoption of specific teaching methodologies or institutional policies.

The study draws from the work of multiple scholars who discuss second-language Writing and translingualism in their research. Manchón & Matsuda (2016) expound on the theory research and applications related to second language writing. Methodological issues are analyzed through frameworks discussed in Matsuda & Silva (2005). Arnold, Nebel, & Ronesi (2017) focus on teaching academic Writing in the MENA region. The edited volume published six years ago focuses on a region that has sadly been underrepresented in rhetorical studies.

3. Glossary:

Academic Writing

Multilingualism

ESL Writing

First Year Writing

Second Year Writing

Writing Across the Curriculum