



Application of Automated Writing Assessment in an EFL Writing Class

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Abstract

Teaching EFL writing course, especially to students with lower English ability has been a nightmare for most language instructors. Students at this level have not yet been able to achieve satisfactory linguistic competence nor have they been prepared to start formal and creative writing. Under these circumstances, in most first-year writing classes, instructors have to spend a major proportion of class time reviewing important word usage, grammar rules and sentence patterns. For classes in which students' language abilities diverse a lot, instructors even need to re-teach them to ensure students all have prerequisite linguistic competence to start with writing.

Research in ESL/EFL writing domain has well documented the importance of process writing on learners' development of writing competence in the target language. Although this claim is well recognized, a major obstacle faced by most language educators has been the enormous workload that this process has put on them. This paper aims to report the findings of using CriterionSM – an on-line automatic writing assessment in an EFL writing class. The author will first illustrate a process-oriented writing approach she utilized in the class via integrating computer-mediated communication technology, which is to be followed by an in-depth description of CriterionSM- its application, evaluation criteria and perceived advantages and limitations. Questionnaires conducted at the end of the course to evaluate the introduction of CriterionSM into the writing class from students' perspectives will be discussed. Recommendations of adopting automatic writing assessment in EFL writing classrooms will also be made to conclude the paper.