



GlobELT: An International Conference on Teaching and Learning English as an Additional Language, Antalya - Turkey

Conversations of the mind: the Impact of journal writing on enhancing EFL medical students' reflections, attitudes, and sense of self

Zahra Hashemi^{a*}, Tayebeh Mirzaei^b

^a*Rafsanjan University of Medical Sciences*

^b*Geriatric Care Research center. Rafsanjan University of Medical Sciences, Rafsanjan, Iran*

Abstract

Journal writing is a means of self expression, and has been used in many disciplines such as psychology, sociology, education and even mathematics and remains a valuable teaching/learning tool in many classrooms, because it not only teaches the students to write, it also encourages them to share their experiences and ideas. In this study a class comprising of 65 medical students were instructed to keep journals to see the level of change in the style, reflections, attitudes and sense of self. The students were instructed to reflect on being a medical student, their clinical experiences and anything that captures their attention. The students were given freedom and choice in choosing the topics and were ensured of confidentiality of their journals. The analysis of the journal contents were reported in 6 themes. The six main themes included of pedagogical, reflections on past experiences, change of attitude, sense of self, personal experiences, and worries about future career. The results indicated a change in all of the aspects of writing. The findings suggest that the process of reflection may be actively facilitated through journals.

Keywords: Journal writing, Medical students, Reflection, Rafsanjan

© 2015 The Authors. Published by Elsevier Ltd. This is an open access article under the CC BY-NC-ND license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>).

Peer-review under responsibility of Hacettepe Üniversitesi.

* Corresponding author. Tel.: +9834340053; fax: +9834340097.
E-mail address: zhshemi2005@yahoo.com

1. Introduction

Reflection is those intellectual and affective activities in which the students explore their experiences in order to lead to new understanding and appreciation (Boud et al., 2013). Journal writing refers to any writing that students perform that challenges the students to reflect on past situations and how they might perform if similar situations arise. Wong et al. (1995) maintain that reflective journal writing involves a reflective process that is initiated when the learner documents the experience encountered, return to the experience recollects what has taken place and replays the experience and reevaluation takes place. Andrusyszyn (2007) believes that through reflection learners have the potential to intentionally connect thoughts, feelings, and experiences to the learning activity in which they are engaged. There are numerous ways for creating situations in which the students could be taught to reflect on their own thinking and promote reflective learning; journal writing is one of these methods. Reflective learning is the key element in learning from experience. It places the emphasis on the self as the source of learning. Self-reflection has been used by many students in different fields including pharmacy, nursing, physical therapy through journals (Bouldin et al., 2006). It has been said that self reflection has a “potential in developing skills in communication, critical thinking, self-learning, self- and social awareness, empathy, and sensitivity to cultural differences” (Bouldin et al., 2006, p. 2). Journal writing has been used extensively to enhance reflection. The process has a long history and has taken many forms, especially in educational contexts. The overwhelming theme in the literature is that journal writing can engage an individual in conversation with the self, promoting the development of introspective awareness. The most common partnership described in the literature for dialogic or interactive journals is between learner and instructor.

Writing is considered a social practice which needs special attention to purpose and audience (Badger & White, 2000). Recently a trend has been incorporated to introduce Iranian students to a process genre based student center pedagogy in the academic setting (Hanjani & Li, 2014). But still in many academic settings the practice of single draft student product is still very common. In medical school because of the demand of school work and medical workload not much writing products are expected from the students. The medical students are required to pass about five general and two ESP English credits. In these classes mostly grammar and vocabulary are taught and students are very reluctant to engage in any writing activity, partly because they lack confidence in their own writing skills and partly because it is conceived as too demanding and time consuming. They are more eager to learn the skills and techniques to help them in the professional field and are rarely interested in any kind of writing. Also, as most Iranian EFL teachers have a low proficiency in the art of teaching writing to the students and consider single draft student products as enough language practice, the students do not develop appropriate writing skills. Self reflection is trying to understand one's self better by stepping back from an experience and deeply considering the feelings and emotions behind the work. Self-reflection in its simplest form is asking yourself thought-provoking questions so that you can develop a deeper level of understanding about yourself. We may engage in self-reflection when we are unsure about something, when we feel like we could have done something differently, or when we want to remind ourselves what we are doing well or what we have accomplished (Schneider Corey et al., 2009). A central characteristic for any person including the students of medicine is an awareness of self including one's identity, cultural perspective, goals, motivations, needs, limitations, strengths, values, feelings, and problems. Self-reflection promotes growth and development is widely supported across all the fields. Furthermore, there is much agreement that being introspective, self-aware, and self-accepting are important characteristics of professional helpers and thereby worthy of attention in the medical education. Learner's attitudes and beliefs affect how they approach learning and the degree of success they gain in language learning (Abraham & Vann, 1987). Of course these attitudes are related to their previous experiences and learning environments.

Journal writing is a means of self expression, and has been used in many disciplines such as psychology, sociology, education and even mathematics and remains a valuable teaching/learning tool in many classrooms, because it not only teaches the students to write, it also encourages them to share their experiences and ideas. (Garmon, 1998) believes that journal writing helps instructors know and understand their students better and therefore tailor instruction to meet their particular needs. Also, for the students it gives them an opportunity to grapple with the ideas presented in class and promotes self reflection, enhances self-knowledge and promotes students' learning. Journal writing is also an activity that stimulates critical thinking and provides feedback about

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/1109762>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/1109762>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)