



Language, History, Politics, and Culture in Global Communication Through the Bologna Process Documentation

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Abstract

Students preparing to enter today's global workplaces need to understand factors that can affect writing and communication practices in international environments. Writing instructors, in turn, need to provide students with educational experiences that can best prepare them for such contexts. For these reasons, writing instructors should consider introducing students to contemporary events or initiatives that can affect international interactions across different genres and media. The Bologna Process, a multi-state effort to reform the higher education in 47 countries, is one such initiative. By integrating aspects of the Bologna Process into the teaching of writing, instructors can work with students to rhetorically analyze writing practices in international contexts, as well as introduce students to the forces affecting them in international environments that affect global workforces.

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1. Introduction

The proliferation of distributed digital workplaces today means students must increasingly interact with people around the world upon completing their formal studies. To be successful communicators in such settings, students must develop their linguistic, cultural, and political literacy. One way writing instructors can prepare students to become proficient global communicators is to help them better understand factors that can affect communication practices in international settings. One international initiative that has important implications for such educational practices is the Bologna Process. Designed to improve economic competitiveness and employment opportunities across 47 participating nations in Europe (see Appendix A), the Process is a voluntary initiative to create a European Higher Education Area (EHEA). The Area represents a higher education structure that would allow member countries to have comparable and transferrable degree programs ([European Higher Education Area, 2014](#)). As a result, the Process creates an international context for writing instruction. It also provides a valuable set of resources, such as complex documentation, that instructors can use to help students examine forms of writing that convey ideas across broad, geopolitical regions and culturally diverse audiences.

This article examines ways in which writing teachers can use Bologna Process documentation to help students better understand writing processes and practices in modern global contexts. Such documentation represents examples of writing for a culturally, linguistically, and historically diverse audience that must now follow documented

information and instruction to successfully participate in a large international sphere. By using materials associated with such initiatives, writing instructors can help students identify various cultural, linguistic, political, economic, and other factors that affect the practice of composing texts for globally distributed audiences. Specifically, this article

- Explains why teaching about the Bologna Process in writing classes is beneficial to students;
- Provides background/contextual information about the Process and documentation in order for teachers to use documents effectively in the classroom;
- Discusses ideas for integrating the study of the Bologna Process in writing classes.

Through such an approach, readers—primarily writing teachers—can better understand how to use texts associated with such international developments as resources for teaching students how to compose effectively in international situations.

2. The Global Nature of Today’s Workplace

College and university-level programs that prepare students for a particular field or line of work often emphasize discipline-specific knowledge and technical skills associated with that area. Healthcare graduates, for example, are expected to develop clinical knowledge for their field of study (e.g., clinical procedures, safety, and knowledge of field regulations). Successfully obtaining employment, however, often involves more than simply possessing field-specific skills. Rather, effective communication and problem-solving skills tend to be central to many hiring and promotion decisions. A recent survey of hiring managers, for example, indicated that employers “identified communication as the most fundamental skill an employee can bring to the job” (MacLennan, 2008, p. 5) and collaborative and interpersonal skills are equally prized in today’s workplace (MacLennan, 2008). The global aspect of the contemporary workplace, however, complicates this situation because college graduates likely will work with and write for co-workers and clients who are from or live in countries with cultures very different from their own (Saleem, 2010). This situation is especially true given the prevalence of online interactions in local and global workplaces (Brewer, 2015).

Moreover, today’s workforce is much more mobile, and migration rates have dramatically diversified the workplace. In the United States, 14 percent of the population was born outside of the country, and Canada, Switzerland, and Australia have nearly double that figure (Connor, Cohn, & Gonzalez-Barrera, 2013). Along with physical mobility, employees will change jobs often, and they must acquire new skill sets to accommodate physical and professional moves (Hugonnier, 2007). These trends in mobility mean that students must be able to relate to and communicate with people from countries and cultures globally as well as locally.

Beyond the workplace, increased cultural exchanges also enhance “world citizenship”—a person’s ability to carry social and economic responsibility outside of one’s national identity to a more worldwide perspective (Hugonnier, 2007). To meet such expectations, employees must know something about how other countries and cultures work and do business (Schmidt, Conaway, Easton, & Wardrope, 2007). Part of this knowledge is knowing the communication values of other cultures. Accordingly, effective global communication is a skill necessary for negotiation, relationship building, and collaboration within multicultural groups (Melton, 2008; Schmidt, Conaway, Easton, & Wardrope, 2007). Consequently, today’s workforce requires graduates who have solid technical and social skills, including interpersonal communication, mobility, adaptability, and an understanding of and respect for cultural diversity.

While not every student will live or work abroad, it is safe to assume that every graduate will communicate with individuals from another country or culture online. Online media, moreover, implies a global audience due to the open access of the Internet in most countries. Students in writing classes should therefore learn how to interact, negotiate meaning, and communicate with international audiences through a variety of media. To do so, students must understand that communication today involves a complex mix of writing styles depending on the audience, purpose, medium, message, and other factors. By fostering an understanding of global contexts, writing teachers can help students become better “world citizens” and learn effective strategies when writing for international audiences (Rice & Hausrath, 2014). The study of the Bologna Process and analysis of related documents can help students develop such skills.

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