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BEYOND PBT TOEFL: THE EFFECTIVENESS OF AN ACADEMIC SKILLS WRITING COURSE

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to investigate the impact of a five-week academic writing skills course on students' writing ability. Two hundred incoming students participated in a pre instruction and post instruction test design research framework. The findings of the study revealed several interesting outcomes: PBT TOEFL cannot serve as a valid indicator of the students' academic writing skills. The analysis of the data revealed that although the AUA incoming students did not have adequate academic writing skills that could be transferred into English, they made a significant progress in the types of writing skills that were covered in the writing course and showed some improvement in the skills for which they did not receive instructions. However, there is more into academic skills writing that needs to be researched. It is hoped that the findings of this study will foster further comprehensive investigation.

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Chapter 1: INTRODUCTION

The present study was carried out at the American University of Armenia (AUA). It aimed to examine the effectiveness of the academic skills writing course on the students' academic writing performance. The student population of AUA is a special group of learners who have completed their undergraduate work and some have work experience in their respective specialties. AUA students enter American University with their Armenian preconceptions and ideas about academic education and academic relationships. This is in accord with Gillett & Wray (2006) who state that each culture fosters the cognitive processes and learning styles appropriate in their society and schools.

Adjustments to the new educational system will take place in the course of time, but the ability to write different types of academic writing tasks will not happen of its own accord. Developing writing skills is among the most challenging tasks at the graduate level. Jordan (1997, p. 46) considers "written work as being one of the major causes of concern for students". He sees the primary aim of English for Academic Purposes (EAP) in helping students apply already acquired academic skills to their academic writing. Those students whose mother tongue is not English, but who already possess study skills to an advanced level in their own language will need help to transfer their skills into English and to adjust them to a different academic environment. However, there are students who do not possess these skills as they did not receive proper instructions in their prior education in L1. The students' needs may differ according to the learning environment.

The past few decades have seen an increase in the research on academic writing particularly in the context of teaching English as a Second Language (TESL) and world Englishes (WE) (Flowerdew & Peacock, 2001). For many students, this is probably the most

important ability as it is the way in which most of their work is assessed. The aim of an academic writing class is to prepare students for academic writing tasks. These tasks vary very much from writing short answers in exams to writing dissertations and theses. Thus, the main objectives of the writing course is to teach both, general academic and subject specific language as well as language related skills such as summarizing, outlining, report writing, writing introductions, listening and note-taking, etc.

Gillet and Wray (2000) claim that the language of the students' academic subject and language related study skills form the main components of the EAP classes. The term 'study skills' is reserved for the more mechanical aspects of study such as referencing, using the library, formatting dissertations and theses, using bibliography, etc., which is called the 'narrow' view by Robinson (1991). Jordan (1997) emphasizes the integrated relationship of the skills, language skills being separate from but basic to study skills. Richards *et al*. (1992) gives the following definition of the study skills:

> Abilities, techniques and strategies which are used when reading, writing, or listening for study purposes, for example, study skills needed by university students studying from English language textbooks include: adjusting reading speeds according to the type of material being read, using the dictionary, guessing word meanings from context, interpreting graphs, diagrams, and symbols, note taking and summarizing (1992, p. 359 in Hyland, 2006).

The academic study skills are necessary to teach both to the native and non-native speakers of English (Gillet, 2006). Non-native speakers (NNSs) as well as Native English

speakers may lack study skills necessary to be successful in graduate studies, especially if these skills were not cultivated in their prior learning environment.

A good command of academic writing skills is one of the major requirements for AUA incoming students to be able to cope with the high academic standards in their major field of studies. That is why irrespective of their TOEFL scores, all AUA incoming students are required to take the five-week Academic Writing Course. The syllabus of this course was designed taking into consideration the English language needs analysis for the MA programs at AUA. According to the needs analysis, the most required study skills were summarizing, note taking from texts and lectures, understanding and describing charts and tables, writing essays, reports and proposals. However, the time constraints of the writing course allowed including only summarizing, data commentary and extended essay writing (referencing, avoiding plagiarism being part of extended essay writing).

Thus, this study attempt to answer the following research questions:

a)   *What is the effectiveness of an academic skills writing course on students' academic writing performance?*

b)   *What is the relationship between the PBT TOEFL scores and students' writing performance?*

Chapter 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter will present a brief review of the literature relevant to the study and is divided into the following parts. First, a historical overview of English for Academic Purposes will be given. Second, it will continue by looking at Academic Writing Course as part of English for Academic Purposes Course. Third, it will look at the types of assessing writing and the scoring procedure.

2.1 What is English for Academic Purposes?

The context of learning a language for conversational purposes differs from learning a language for academic purposes. Academic writing course is an integral part of English for Academic Purposes (hereafter EAP), which is identified as a sub-category of English for Specific Purposes (ESP). EAP is viewed as a student's need for "quick and economical use of the English language to pursue a course of academic study" (Coffey, 1984, p 4). More often native English speakers as well as non-native speakers (NNSs) lack the study skills necessary to be successful in their graduate studies. According to Jordan, the aim of the EAP course is to equip non-native English speakers with sufficient language skills for English medium settings. The primary aim of EAP is to help students apply already learned academic skills to their academic studies (Jordan, 1997).

Flowerdrew and Peacock, Jordan, define EAP as "teaching English with the aim of facilitating learners' study or research in that language "(2001:8; 1997:1). Basically, the EAP approach gives students an opportunity to enhance their language skills to deal with academic genres and be a consistent member of the discourse community (Swales, 1990).

Hyland points out that EAP is becoming an extended term that includes all areas referring to academic communicative practice, which are as follows:

- Pre-tertiary, undergraduate and postgraduate teaching (from the design of materials to lectures and classroom tasks)

- Classroom interactions (from teacher feedback to tutorials and seminar discussions)

- Research genres (from journal articles to conference papers and grant proposals).

- Student writing (from essay to exam papers and graduate theses).

- Administrative practice (from course documents to doctoral oral defenses) Hyland (2006, p.1).

2.2 The history of English for Academic Purposes

Since the wring course is an inseparable part of the EAP, a brief historical survey of the development of EAP merits some consideration. The history of EAP begins in the mid-1960s and extents to the early 1970s. The term EAP was first conceptualized within the framework of English for science and technology (EST) centers. The intension of EST was to teach students literary texts. The attempt was to get rid of the assumption that language teaching is allied to the study of literature and only. According to Strevens (1977:90) teaching only literature and not other kinds of texts, secondary school English teachers were neglecting to prepare "scientifically inclined" students for further studies. To this regard Stervens (1977) recommended offering courses geared to the eventual uses students would make of the language in their future studies and jobs. That is, language could with advantage be matched to the specific needs and purposes of the learner. The name 'English for Special

Purposes' (ESP) characterizes such courses which were designed for specific audience and for specific purposes. It was then, that "English for Specific Purposes" began to be used.

EAP became one of the two main branches of ESP: language in *professional* and *workplace environment* which can be referred to as "EOP" *English for Occupational Purposes*. From that moment on EAP started to grow rapidly.

2.3 The growth of EAP

For many learners pre-sessional EAP course is the first step to be acquainted with academic traditions and norms. These courses are designed especially for the purpose of empowering students to enhance their academic communication skills.

Brain (in Hyland, 2006:4) presents evidence that EAP is becoming available at every level starting from early schooling years to postgraduate thesis writing and other academic items. Hyland argues that the purpose of EAP courses should not be directly addressing the needs of non-native speakers only. He claims that a number of L1 English-speakers who enter universities without having any background knowledge of academic skills have valued EAP courses as a crucial component to their learning needs. This growing role of EAP hasn't developed very smoothly. Most EAP courses have depended on the teachers' preferences in preparing appropriate materials for their students, because as Hyland notes, many EAP courses have not been empowered by theoretical grounding. Benesch (2001), states that recently this picture has changed towards more interesting and redesigned EAP courses that are based on current pedagogic approaches such as consciousness raising, genre analysis.

2.4 The Applied Nature of EAP

The applied nature of EAP was initially related to curriculum and instruction rather than to theory and analysis (Hyland, 2006). Originating from applied linguistics and education, EAP has witnessed some of the key developments within the modern academic context. These are:

- Students have to take on new roles and to engage with knowledge in new ways when they enter higher education.

- Communication practices are not uniform across academic disciplines but reflect different ways of constructing knowledge and engaging in teaching and learning.

- These practices are underpinned with power and authority, which work to advantage or marginalize different groups and to complicate teaching and learning.

- The growth of English as a world language of academic communication has resulted in the loss of scholarly writing in many national cultures (Hyland, 2006, p. 8).

These features raise both interesting and contradictory issues in recognizing and identifying EAP and its nature. Being involved in such issues EAP has established its permanent position and status as a sphere. This has opened a window for teachers to recognize their main role which is not just to teach students to learn English, but to prepare

them for academic discipline and allow them to communicate in new academic and cultural environments.

2.5 Specific or General academic purposes

One key issue concerning EAP is its specificity, or as Hyland categorizes it, the distinction between what has been called *English for General Academic Purposes* and *English for Specific Academic Purposes.* Following the principles of EGAP teachers isolate the skills common for all disciplinary cases. Dudley-Evans and ST John (1998) categorize the following activities:

- Listening to lectures.

- Participating in supervisions, seminars, and tutorials.

- Reading textbooks, articles, and other material.

- Writing essays, examination answer, dissertations, and reports (Dudley-Evans and ST John 1998, p. 41).

This was followed by questioning, note taking, summary writing, giving prepared presentations, and other academic practices. In contrast, ESAP focuses on teaching skills and language appropriate to the demands of a certain discipline. This distinction between general and specific approaches to language continues to be an urgent issue among teachers. Here the problematic issue is to understand whether these above mentioned language skills and features are really common for all disciplinary cases or whether they are related to the demands of a particular context appropriate to the learners' needs in a specific target

discipline. In light of all these distinctions, it is important to understand what these two EGAP and ESP distinct approaches offer.

2.6 Enlarging the idea of specificity

It is important to conceptualize what teachers and students' expectations are towards diverse disciplines. In response to this, Hyland (2006) questions whether EAP is to be seen as essentially skills-based, text-based or practice-based. To arrive at the answers to these questions the author advises to clarify the concept of EAP. In the first place it is essential to understand EAP's role as an academic discipline, and its position as an academic subject.

2.6.1 EAP and Changing Context

The main reason EAP moved towards changes is because:

- Academic society has subsequently developed various new teaching approaches which students find helpful for their needs. This has meant going one step forward to meet the rich and various university conditions in which students are called upon to respond to.

- There are growing numbers of students from 'non-traditional' backgrounds who enter the university. These students come from different social groups representing different working classes, ethnic minorities, mean that there is a great tendency to have different orientations of cultural, social and linguistic identities.

- Students' populations gradually follow an increasingly heterogeneous mix of academic subjects. This means that instead of providing only single-subject degrees the university finds more complex modular degrees and emergent

'practice-based' courses, which include nursing, management and teaching. Hyland agrees that these new courses create difficulties for students who have to make decisions about genres, departments, and disciplines. Although besides the fact that the innovative approaches are challenging, the diversity takes on an even more important role as employers seek graduates empowered with all the necessary technical and interpersonal communication skills to be able to stand with the demands of modern market. The author concludes by stating that this increasing diversity has helped EAP become more central in the university (Hyland, 2006, p.17).

Any EAP course starts with the following question: "Why do students learn English?" According to Hyland (2008) it is the question which helps to create or design a course relevant to students' needs and interests. The following section will examine the role of the needs analysis in the EAP context.

2.7 The concept of Needs Analysis

When designing an EAP course the first step is to understand why students learn English. Therefore, in the role of the EAP lecturer is to find out what the students need, what they have to do in their academic courses, and help them to do this better in the time available. An adaptation of Bell (1981, p. 50) provides a useful model to do this (Figure 1).

Figure 1 Course design model
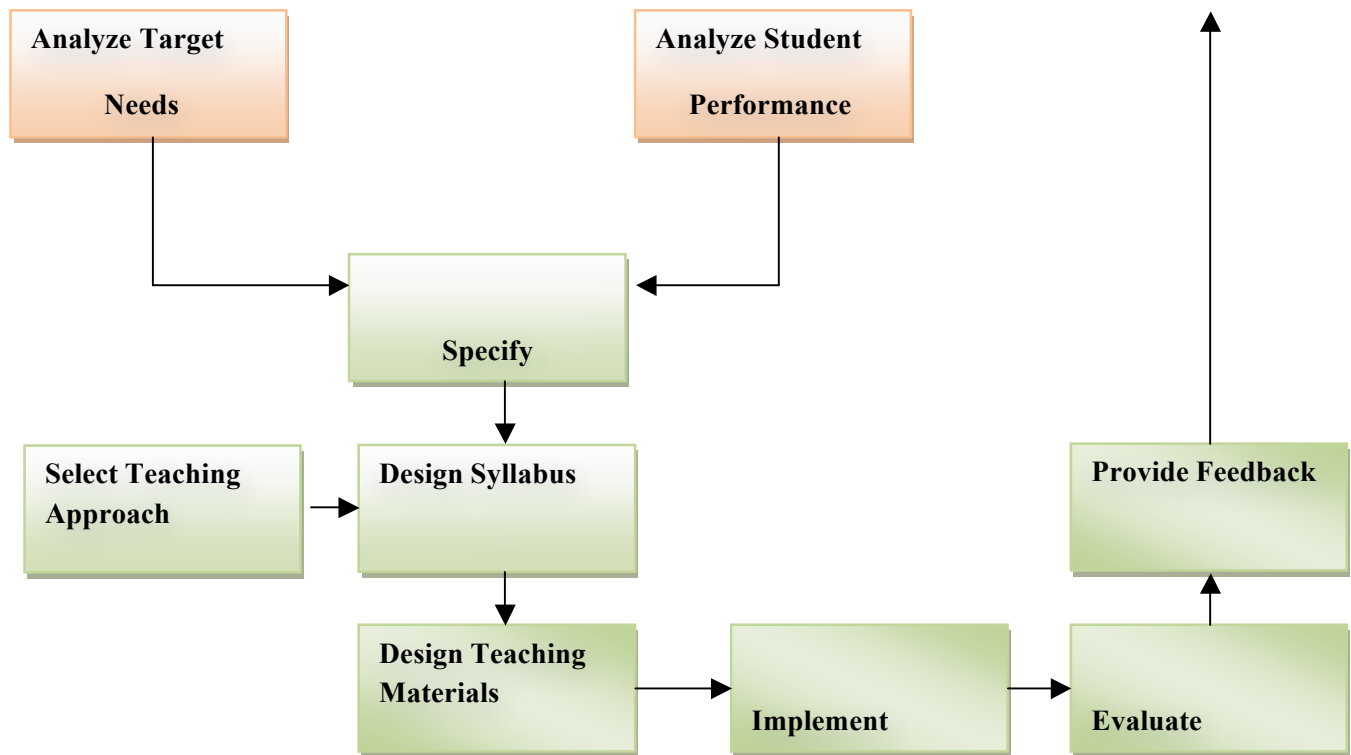
Dudley-Evans (1998) points out that until the emergence of ESP, course design in English language teaching was largely based on the teachers' decisions to decide what learners need. Today, the situation has changed. The term carries much broader sense and includes linguistic and learning factors, which tempts to multidimensional approaches. Needs analysis refers to the techniques for collecting and assessing information relevant to course design: it is the means of establishing the *how* and *what* of a course.

Different scholars (Robinson, 1991; Nunan, 1988; and Hutchinson & Waters, 1987) have defined needs analysis in slightly different ways, the following could be stated as a commonly accepted working definition:

"NA is a process through which qualitative and quantitative information is collected to identify learners' specific purposes of language use, subjective and objective needs, and target and present situation language skills needs. NA is usually accomplished through utilizing certain data collection instruments like interviews, observations, questionnaires" (1991:4).

As Hyland notes, needs analysis is an ongoing process, because from time to time there is a necessity to recognize what to change and what to adapt in order to meet students' needs and interests towards the course. Needs is a large concept that involves learners' goals and backgrounds, their proficiency in language, their incentives to take the course, their teaching and learning styles, their expectations of the course, etc. Dudley-Evans and St. John (1998) differentiate Needs Analysis as present situation analysis and target situation analysis. Present situation analysis concerns 'starting where the students are' and refers to information about learners' current proficiencies and ambitions: what they can do and what they want at the beginning of the course; their skills and perceptions; their familiarity with the specialist subject; and what they know of its demands and genres. This kind of data can be both objective in terms of age, proficiency, and prior learning experiences and subjective in terms of self-perceived needs, strengths and weaknesses. Brindley (in Hyland, 2006) catalogues it as 'means needs' which allows students to learn and pursue their language goals as the course progresses, and 'ends needs' related to target goals.

Target situation analysis concerns the learners' future roles and the linguistic skills and knowledge they need to perform competently in their discipline. This relates to communication needs rather than learning needs and involves mainly objective and product-oriented data: identifying the contexts of language use, observing the language events in these contexts, and collecting and analyzing target genres (Dudley-Evans and St John, 1998, p. 74).

Hyland notes that unfortunately EAP course not always take into account students needs by conducting an investigation and collecting data. Moreover, teachers design their course objectives having incomplete information. Basically needs analysis has to be done in a cyclical process. Hyland notes that behind each successful EAP course there is a continuous way of measuring and evaluating the efficacy and usefulness of the course by improving the objectives. To gather data on the diverse needs of students, scholars suggest different techniques for collecting needs data. The most prominent and widely applied approaches are as follows:

- Questionnaires.

- Analysis of authentic spoken and written texts.

- Structures interviews.

- Observations.

- Informal consultations with faculty, learners, other EAP teachers, etc.

- Assessment results (Hyland, 2006, p.78).

Each of these categories has to serve its purpose interest. However, Hyland claims that sometimes the very purpose does not supply its rights. As a result surveys of academic writing tasks, for example, have asked both subject tutors and students to

categorize the tasks necessary for particular course instruction. Many such kind of surveys fail, because they do not go beyond generic labels. For example, in one particular survey there can be items like 'essay', 'report', or 'critical review' without assuring that they may have different importance in different course instructions. Therefore, there should be clear idea about the academic discipline.

2.9 Types of writing assigned in academic course

The effectiveness of an academic writing course depends crucially on its capacity to meet the writing needs of its participants (Flowerdew and Peacock 2001). To prepare students for university courses, it is important to have information about the types of writing tasks actually required across academic disciplines and about instructors' purposes in assigning these skills.

Kroll (1979) gave 35 international students and 20 American students –all enrolled in freshman English courses at the University of Southern California-a questionnaire on the past, current, and future writing needs. The two groups had similar past writing experiences and current academic writing needs; international students also predicted a need to do some writing in English in future job. Kroll interpreted these results as justification for the requirement that ESL students take English composition courses. She argues, however, that composition courses let students practice the types of writing they really need.

Ostler (1980) reports on another survey of international students at the University of Southern California. To determine if its advanced ESL classes were meeting student needs, the American Language Institute administered a questionnaire t o131 of its students (96 undergraduate and 35 graduates), asking them to assess the academic skills needed to complete their degree objectives as well as to evaluate their own language abilities in several

contexts. A distinction was found was found between skills most needed by undergraduates and those most needed by graduates. For example, undergraduates more frequently indicated a need to take multiple-choice exams than essay exams and to write lab reports. Advanced undergraduates and graduates more frequently indicated a need to read academic journals and write critiques, research proposals, and research papers.

AUA students needs analysis survey, (2009) collected data from 120 students and 15 lecturers at American University. This research demonstrated that the currently existing writing course could not meet the demands of the departments neither could it meet the needs of the students. Both, the students and lecturers regarded as highly important writing essays, reports, proposals, summaries, understanding and describing charts and tables, and note taking from lectures and texts.

The studies cited above indicate that many types of writing tasks are assigned in university courses; types of tasks emphasized vary from one academic level to another (especially lower division undergraduate versus graduate), from one academic field to another and even within disciplines.

According to Shih (1986) writing is often required as a mode of demonstrating knowledge (e.g. in essay exams, summaries) and is used by instructors as a means of prompting independent thinking, researching, and learning (e.g. in critiques, research papers). Especially in the academic fields chosen most often by nonnative students, tasks require mostly transactional or informative writing: writing from personal experience only is rare.

Writing instruction for students at the beginning of their undergraduate education needs to prepare them to handle a variety of tasks across disciplines. As students begin to

specialize, they must learn to gather and interpret data according to methods and standards accepted in their fields, to bring an increasing body of knowledge to bear on their interpretations, and to write in specialized formats.

2.10 Approaches to teaching writing in ESL programs

The formal writing tasks assigned in university course require students to exercise skills such as complex thinking, researching, and language skills. Traditional composition course have often fallen short in helping ESL students to develop the skills needed to do real academic writing tasks. Content-based academic writing instruction may be a more effective means of promoting students to develop the requisite skills. The formal academic writing tasks identified in the survey literature require students to restate or recast information presented in course lectures, readings, and discussions or to report on original thinking and research connected to the course content.

2.10.1. Content –Based Academic Writing Courses

Content-based academic writing courses prepare students who are at the beginning of undergraduate study to handle writing tasks across disciplines. Typically, a course may be organized around sets of readings on selected topics-narrow input, in Krashen's sense (1985, p. 73). In recent years, a number of texts of this nature have been published –generally aimed at academic writing course for native English writers. Students are guided to practice reading skills, study skills, and forms of writing common to many academic writing assignments, such as summary, personal response, synthesis, and critique/ evaluation (Behrens & Rosen, 1985; Spatt, 1983), and basic expository schemata such as listing, definition, seriation, classification, and comparison/contrast (Kiniry & Strenbski, 1985). This type of content-based course also serves to introduce students to the nature of inquiry, techniques and

standards for gathering and evaluating evidence, and writing formats characteristic of different academic fields (Bazerman, 1895). A content-based academic writing course is attractive because it can be incorporated into an existing composition program without necessitating the cooperation of instructors in other academic discipline.

2.11 Scoring Procedure for writing assessment

The scoring process as Weigle (2008) state is an important and inconsistent element in making decision about writers. In writing assessment the authors isolate two elements crucial in the contexts of making a final decision about someone's writing. These are: defining the rating scale and ensuring that raters use the scoring procedure appropriately and constantly.

2. 11.1. Types of rating scale

One of the essential factors to take into account while scoring a task is to recognize what type of scoring will be used for that particular task. As Weigle (2008) note three types of rating scales are of critical importance. These are: primary trait scales, holistic scales, and analytical scales, which in their turns are distinguished by two main features: first of all it is important to understand whether the measurement scale is to be used only for a particular task instruction or it should be referred to all types of tasks, and second, it is necessary to know whether one score or multiple scores are to be given to a particular task.

2.11.2. Primary trait scoring

Lloyd-Jones (in Weigle, 2008), who has launched a large-scale testing program for schools in the USA based his theory on primary trait scale. Primary-trait scoring aims to find out to what extent students can survive to write in limited discourse (explanation, persuasion, and argumentation). In the context of primary trait scale a scoring rubric is created, which

provides separate scores taking into account the writing task, a statement of the primary rhetorical trait (argumentative essay, narrative, cause-effect essay, etc.) elicited by the task, a hypothesis about the expected performance on the task, a statement of the relationship between the task and the primary trait, a rating scale which articulates levels of performance, sample scripts at each level, explanations of why each script was scored as it was. He appreciates the importance of this type of scoring system. But it is important to notice that in order to create a scoring guide of this type about 60-80 minutes will be needed, which is not so practical although it provides meaningful information about test takers, about their performance. Unfortunately, primary trait assessment has no place in the second language writing.

2.11.3. Holistic Scoring

One of the characteristics of holistic scoring is its less reliable approach to writing task. Holistic scoring sees writing as a single entity which requires a single scoring procedure. In holistic scoring the scoring criteria are not explicitly determined. As a result human sense with its sensitive and subjective characteristics plays a central role in grading a task. Research done by Diederich, has shown that human judgments are not reliable. They do not want to criticize the value of the holistic scoring at all. What are problematic here are the conditions under which the assessment procedure takes place. Taking into account the average time to score two - page handwritten essays that include 500 words, which may take no more than two minutes to check can't allow the test evaluator to capture the essence of the essay the writer has created.

In contrast, Weigle (2008) notifies that over the past 25 years holistic scoring has played prominent role in writing assessment and besides its negative elements it carries a

number of positive features. First of all it allows the rater to read the prompt and give a single score in a limited time frame. Another positive element White (1988) has noted is that holistic scoring allows the rater to focus his/her attention to the power of the writing. Thus the writer is graded not for his/her ability of writing grammatically correct sentences but for his/her potential to write meaningfully. To cite one more advantage, White claims that holistic scoring is valid in favor of analytical scoring. To his point of view holistic scoring is more authentic and personal factor is more emphasized, meanwhile in analytical scoring, where the main emphasis is focused on different elements of the text views   the meaning as a secondary matter. Next to all these advantages there are many disadvantages as well. One of the disadvantages of holistic scoring is that one single score given to the task is not enough to make a strength full decision about one's writing ability. Second disadvantage is that a single score can't be enough to provide information about different aspects of the writing components such as: control of syntax, the validity of selected vocabulary, organization, rhetorical control, and so on. Another problematic issue of holistic scoring is that it is not easy to interpret scores, because as a rule raters do not use any standardized scoring criteria which will allow raters to make the same logical inference.

2.11.4. Analytical scoring

In contrast to holistic scoring, analytical scoring provides opportunity to reflect on all parts of writing prompt. Analytical scoring has an advantage to provide more detailed information about organization, cohesion, register, vocabulary, rhetorical control, structure and, so on. At the same time it allows to have valid information about a person's writing ability taking into account all the writing components. This is the reason that analytical scoring is highly appreciated by a number of writing specialists. Jacobs (1981) is known for

creating one of the most well-known analytical scales in ESL context. He distinguishes five

aspects of writing to score. These are: *content* (30points), *language use* (25 points),

organization and *vocabulary* (20 points), and *mechanics* (5 points). Another distinguished

scoring scale has been offered by Cyril Weir (1988). Unlike the one Jacobs has offered Weir

has set seven scales, which was piloted before it could be applied. The next type of scaling

procedure has been developed by Michigan Writing Assessment Scoring Guide (Hamp-

Lyons, 1990) for grading an entrance writing examination. What it offers is three-scale

scoring procedure. These are: *ideas* and *arguments*, *rhetorical features*, and *language*

control.

As any of the scoring strategies analytical scoring has its disadvantages too. One of

the main shortcomings of the analytical scoring is time construction. It takes more time to

check test takers' tasks. Also, even if in analytical scoring different scores are provided

depending on the purpose of the test content, however a single score is presented, which

makes the process difficult to determine what the score actually means. As a result the whole

complex of information given to the task gets lost. These kinds of issues, however, should

not create problems to make a reasonable choice, because as Bachman and Palmer note, the

choice of testing procedures depends mostly on the purpose and intention of the test

construct.

2.12 Designing the Scoring rubric
As Weigle (2008) mentions when the decision is made about the rating scale, the

second step is to design the scale or scoring rubric. Rubrics are of critical importance, as they

reflect all the test items that are to be measured. At the same time Weigle (2008) argues that

relying only on a rubric as an independent procedure is not enough to be useful for making

any decision about the test results. Therefore, it is necessary to have a rubric that is usable, practical and interpretable. Weigle identifies some important factors to consider while designing a scoring scale. These are as follows:

1. Who is going to use the scoring rubric? Alderson (1991) categorizes three types of functions the rater can use while applying the rating scales: Constructor-oriented scales that are supposed to guide the construction of tests appropriate to a particular level, assessor-oriented scales that are designed to guide the rating process, user-oriented scales that are intended to provide useful information to help test users interpret test scores.

2. What aspects of writing are most important, and how will they be divided up?

As discussed above the scoring scales is used depending on the purpose of the test task. For example, if the intention is to elicit information about a person's specific language abilities in non academic context, it is meaningful to get information about different parts of writing components such as grammatical accuracy, organization of the content or rhetorical features. In another case, for instance in post-secondary academic classes, there is no need to pay more attention to all aspects of writing, therefore the main stress will be addressed to communicative skills.

3. How many points, or scoring levels, will be used?

While designing scoring procedures, it is necessary to take into account writers' proficiency. However, as Weigle (2008) states there are limits regardless of any condition. To support the view point he claims that many large-scale assessment programs like TOEFL use six-point scale. There are others who use nine-point scale. It mostly depends on the requirements of the task construction. The author claims that for example if the decision is to make on the

basis of 'pass', 'fail' conditions, it is appropriate to provide a few point scale. If the decision is to place someone into appropriate class, there should be provided more point scales. Bachman and Palmer (1996) suggest setting more score points, since the human error is always available to obstruct the process of grading accurately and consistently.

4. How will scores be reported?

Scale score can be interpreted separately or integrated depending on the context. For example if the decision is to be made about the diagnostic purposes, scoring scales can be reported separately, whereas combined scores are appropriate in making placement, exit, or exemption decisions. There is a strong belief that combined scoring procedures are more reliable than separate scoring ones. Moreover, Weigle (2008) draws parallels between combined and analytical scoring systems. Both of them give a reasonable information about a person' writing ability. Like analytical scoring, combined scoring provides a single total score, which does not provide a room for interpretation.

In the light of this discussion, I will address the following research question:

1. *What is the effectiveness of an academic skills writing course on students' academic writing performance?*

2. *What is the relationship between the PBT TOEFL scores and students' writing performance?*

This study will reveal the extent to which the writing course provides a framework for incoming AUA students to improve their writing skills. Thus, all the findings of the study will provide useful information for course planners and faculty members to understand what steps are necessary to improve students' writing abilities.

Chapter 3: METHODOLOGY

In the methodology chapter, I will explain how I conducted my research. I will provide as comprehensive an explanation as possible so that future researchers will be able to replicate the study. To achieve this goal, I will try to explain clearly the purpose of the study by answering the following questions: (1) who the participants of my study were (2) what the participants were required to do (3) what type of research design was used (4) what type of materials and instruments were used.

3.1 Participants

The participants were two hundred students who took the pre-sessional English for Academic Purposes Writing Course in the summer of 2009 at the American University of Armenia. To be admitted to AUA the applicants had to take either institutional TOEFL or iBT exams. The majority of students took the institutional TOEFL exam, their scores ranging from 530 to 650 and only five students took the iBT exam, their scores ranging from 81 to 108. The participants' age ranged from 21 to 40. They all were undergraduate students from different higher institutions of Armenia and had different levels of proficiency in English, but they all had one thing in common – they all had a Bachelor degree in the hard sciences or humanities and aimed for MAs in Business and Management, Public Health, Political Sciences, Computer Information Science, Industrial Engineering, Law or the Department of English Programs (See figure 1).

All AUA newly admitted students have to take the pre-sessional English for Academic Purposes Writing Course. This course is aimed at helping students to acquire an adequate level of academic writing competence in English so that they can successfully cope

with the academic writing tasks that they will be required to deal with in their graduate studies.

Figure 2. Participants by number and faculty

65	School in Business and manageme	
30	Teaching English as a Foreign Language	
31	Political Sciences	
28	Industrial Engineering & /Computer Information	
28	Law	
18	Public Health	
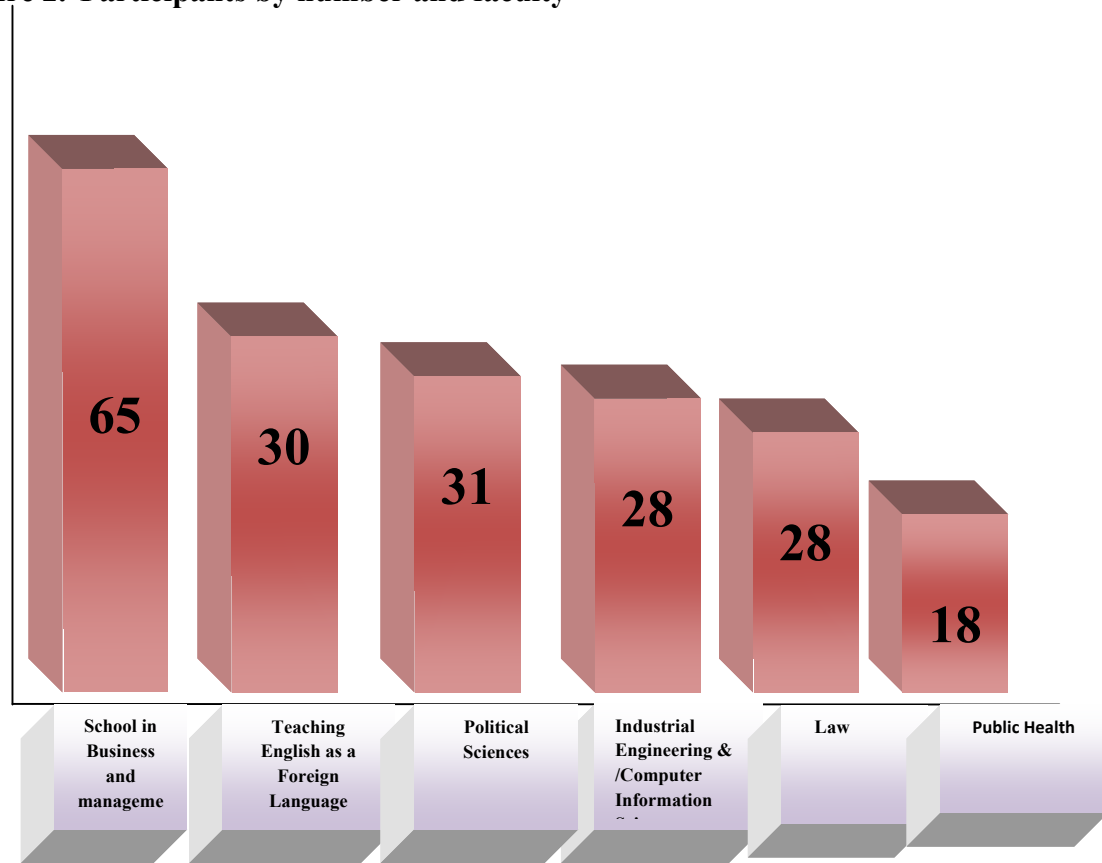
3.2. Instruments

Four instruments were used in this study: a) an institutional paper and pencil TOEFL test scores, b) essays scores, written as a supplement to PBT and rated by the expert raters at the Extension Program at AUA c) pre instruction test (at the start of the writing course), and d) post instruction test (at the end of the writing course). The tests were administered to two hundred students who were divided into 12 groups, 18-21 students in each group.

3.3. Data Collection

The data were collected during the three-month period in July, August and September. As the research had to deal with the students' entrance PBT TOEFL and essay scores, it was necessary to have the permission of the committee on human research council at American University of Armenia. The TOEFL scores were obtained within one week in July. The data for the pre instruction and post instruction tests were collected in the first and last weeks of the writing course (August 28, 2009, and September 21, respectively). The tests were administered during the class hours. To ensure confidentiality, the students were asked not to write their names, instead, they wrote their ID numbers.

3.4. Test Description

The test items were constructed based on the course objectives. It is worth mentioning that the course syllabus of the current five-week writing course has been designed taking into account the results of a needs research conducted at AUA. The purpose of the needs analysis project was to investigate both, the current students' needs in the area of writing skills, and AUA graduates' current language and study skills in their occupational areas. This project also investigated AUA lecturers' expectations of their students' academic abilities. The outcome of the needs analysis helped the writing course designers include those academic skills that were primarily emphasized as important both by students and by lecturers.

Because of the time constrains of the academic writing course, it was impossible to include all the requisite academic writing skills mentioned by the students and lecturers. The current writing course syllabus covered only three academic skills: summarizing, data

commentary, and extended essay writing. It was obvious that all the other highly important academic skills mentioned by the students and lecturers including Report Writing, Taking Notes from Lectures, Writing Proposals, etc. had to be left out.

However, for the research purpose, in designing the pre and post instruction tests, in addition to summary and essay writing and data commentary, for which students were to receive instructions, the following academic skills were also included: *taking notes from lectures and outlining*.

The pre instruction test was designed to investigate:

   a) Students' readiness for academic writing tasks

The post instruction test was designed to examine:

   a) How well the students acquired the academic skills they were taught

   b) Whether the writing course helped the students to improve those academic skills

   for which they did not receive direct instruction (note taking and outlining).

3.4.1. Test Construction

The pre and post instruction tests consisted of five tasks: Taking Notes from Lectures, Summarizing, Outlining, Understanding and Describing Charts and Tables, and Essay Writing. The test took 80 minutes and had a total of 70 points.

The first task required students to listen to a lecture and take notes. Based on their notes they had to write a summary of 150 words. In the second task the students were required to read a text and write a summary of the reading in no more than 200 words. While writing the summary, students had to illustrate their understanding of the main ideas and details.

The third task was outlining. The students were asked to give a topic outline. In the fourth task the students were required to explain and interpret the information given in the charts by using the appropriate vocabulary. And finally the fifth task required students to write an essay. They had to select one of the two prompts and write an essay. (See Appendices 1 and 2)

3.5. Description of scoring rubric checklist

For every writing assignment different scoring rubrics were developed specific to the needs and requirements of the task. For the essay writing "*AUA composition rating scale*" *was* utilized. The maximum score was 20 points. The four aspects were differentially weighted to emphasize *content* (6 points), *rhetorical control* (6 points), *grammar* (4 points), and *vocabulary*, style and register (4points). See Figure 3. (See Appendix 3 for essay rating rubrics)

Figure 3
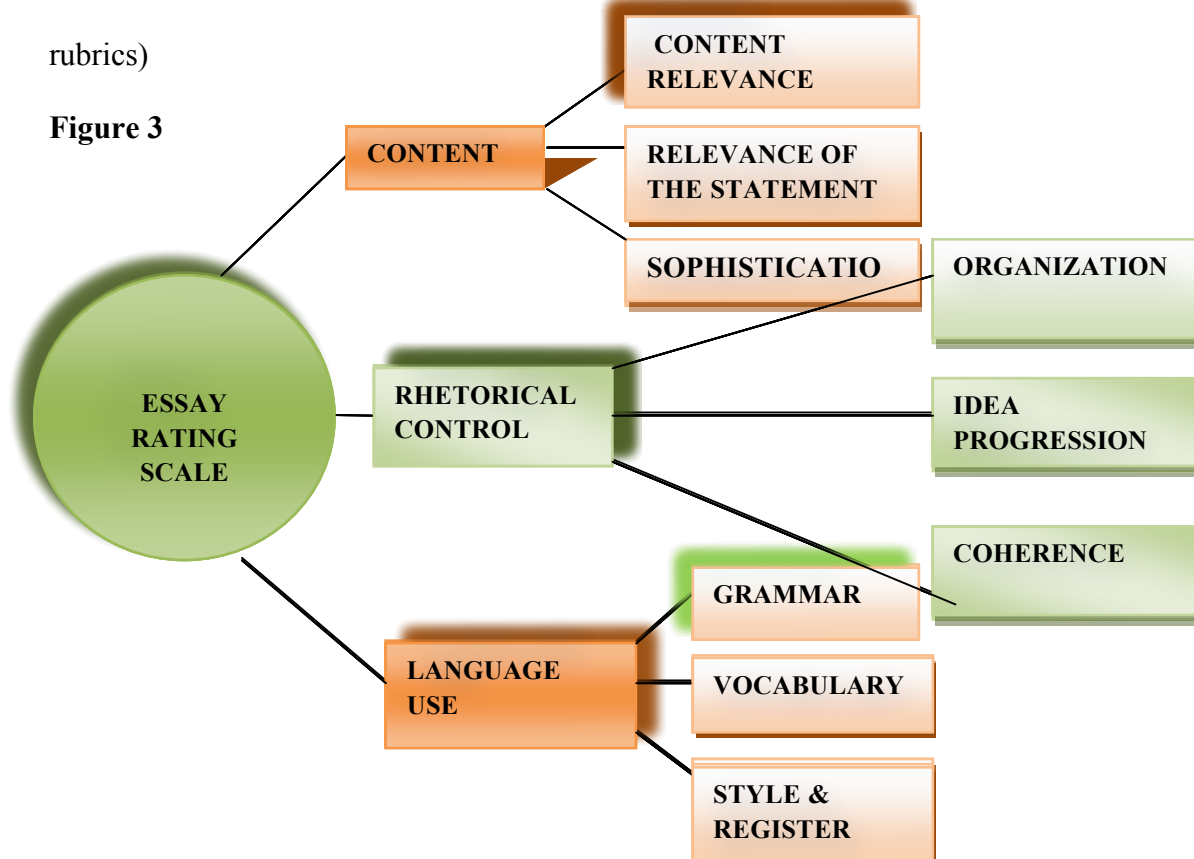
For the note- taking appropriate rubrics were developed based on the principles of the note-taking technique. Note-taking require skills in evaluating information, deciding what needs to be focused on and noted, skills in organizing information and seeing how one idea relates to others. In taking notes, the students had to distinguish between the main and supporting ideas and details. The notes were rated out of three (0.5) points for each item. Note-taking rubric was developed to address the accuracy of organizing and structuring the notes. (See Appendix 4.1). As students were required to take notes and transfer them into a small summary passage, two grading checklists were utilized: one for the notes, and one for the summary text. The maximum score for the summary task was 12 pts, which consisted of four descriptors for *content*, *organization*, *language use*, *length of the summary* and *supporting details* each of which was rated three points (See Appendix 4.2).

In developing the rubrics for summarizing, the following academic skills were paid attention to: the ability to restate the ideas in one's own words, to distinguish between the main points and supporting details, to give the reader an accurate sense of the content and emphasis of the original. The summary was rated out of 15 points, five items each of which was rated 3 points (See Appendix 5).

In developing the rubrics for outlining, the organization of ideas, in terms of listing the main ideas and supporting details; the order of the ideas and details, their relative importance, and how they relate to each other were taken into consideration. Outlining was rated out of 18 points, 4 points for each item. (See Appendix 6).

Finally the rubric developed for data commentary was to weigh content, vocabulary, and language accuracy. The maximum score was 3 pts, 0.5 for each item. (See Appendix 7).

3.6. Procedure

85 entrance exam essays, which were originally graded by the extension program raters as part of the TOEFL test, for the purposes of this study, were re-graded by a group of raters, which consisted of two DEP instructors, a researcher and an instructor from the extension program. The purpose of re-grading the essays was twofold: a) to ensure consistency of the scores, b) to see whether there exists any relationship between the supplementary essay scores and the PBT TOEFL scores. The procedure for calculating the inter-rater reliability was as follows.

First, a norming session was organized for non experts (the researcher and another instructor from the Extension Program), during which seven randomly chosen essays were re-graded by two instructors from the DEP and two non experts. The ratings were discussed during the norming session, resolving potential disagreements. This was a good learning experience for the non experts and ensured their preparedness for further grading of essays.

Then, to measure the go-togetherness of the ratings of expert and non expert raters, thirty randomly selected essays were re-graded individually by both the experts and non experts to investigate whether the ratings of the experts correlate with those of non experts. The existence of positive correlation between the two pairs (the DEP instructors & non experts) allowed non experts to re-grade the remaining 48 essays, using the same rating scale. In re-grading the essays, the AUA essay rating scale was used, which included content, rhetorical control, language/grammar, and language/vocabulary, register and style. The re-graded essays were typed so that the students' handwriting would not affect the rating of the essays. Also the students' official grades were removed.

The second part of the study was to develop the pre instruction and post- instruction tests. Before administering the pre-instruction test, the test was piloted at a "Remedial English Course" at American University of Armenia. The six-week remedial English course is designed for those students whose TOEFL score is below 550. The primary aim of the course is to raise the students' general English language proficiency in all four skills: reading, writing, listening, speaking as well as basic study skills for effective functioning in Masters-level programs at AUA.

The pilot test was administered to 54 students. A range of changes were made in the test, which helped to construct improved pre-instruction and post-instruction tests. The pre-instruction and post-instruction tests were administered to all incoming students who took the writing course. There were twelve groups of 18-20 students who were taught by three instructors. For the research purposes, three groups were formed into three groups according to the number of instructors.

Chapter 4: FINDINGS

To estimate the degree of go-togetherness of the grades, at first, correlational analysis was used to compute the inter-rater reliability of the 30 entrance exam essays, graded by the three pairs of raters: AUA Extension program raters, the expert raters and non expert raters (See Table 1).

Table 4.1 Pearson Correlation between TOEFL scores and supplementary essay scores rated by the three pairs of raters (N=30)

	Expert rater 1	Expert rater 2	Extension rater 1	Extension rater 2	Non-expert rater 1	Non-expert rater 2	TOEFL
Expert rater 1	1	.663**	.554**	.548**	.625**	.572**	.284
Expert Rater 2		1	.510**	.563**	.629**	.617**	.412**
Extension rater 1			1	.796**	.674**	.841**	.310
Extension rater 2				1	.482**	.792**	302
Non-expert rater 1					1	.691**	.496**
Non-expert rater 2						1	.468**
TOEFL							1

The results of the analysis showed a high positive correlation between raters. However, the correlation between the scores given by the extension raters was slightly higher than those by expert and non expert raters. This may be due to the fact that the two Extension raters have more experience in rating essays.

The thirty essays graded by the Extension raters, re-graded by the expert raters + non expert raters, were correlated with the PBT TOEFL results to see whether there is any relationship between the PBT TOEFL scores and the essay scores. The findings revealed that there was no significant correlation between TOEFL scores and the ratings. This implies that there is not enough evidence to claim that students' TOEFL scores can reflect their academic writing performance.

It should be mentioned that although correlation coefficients provide useful information on the go-togetherness of the scores, they may not indicate the performance levels of the participants on the study measures (Farhady, 2000). To this end, paired Samples T-test was performed to compare the degree of the relationship between the mean scores of individual raters in each pair. The results of the paired Samples T-test showed that there was no significant difference between the mean scores of the Extension raters; T value was 1.80, in case of the DEP raters T-value was 1.28.; in case of the non expert raters T value was (1.88).

The mean scores of essays of all three pairs of raters (Extension program, expert and non experts) were compared using one way repeated measure ANOVA. The results of the analysis showed that there was a significant difference between the mean scores of the paired raters; F value is 14.72, which exceeds F critical. The mean difference is shown in Descriptive Statistics (See Table 2).

Table 4.2 Dependent Variables

Raters	Mean
Extension raters	14.17
DEP raters	11.23
Non expert raters	12.40

The next step was to correlate the remaining 48 essays which were graded by Extension Program raters and re-graded by non expert raters.

Table 4.3 Pearson Correlation between TOEFL scores and supplementary essay scores rated by the Extension Program raters and non expert raters (N=48)

	Non expert rater 1	Non expert rater 2	Extension rater 1	Extension rater 2	TOEFL
Non expert rater 1	1	.952**	.784**	.787**	.109
Non expert rater 2		1	.815**	.830**	.192
Extension rater 1			1	.841**	.287**
Extension rater 2				1	.321**
TOEFL					1

The results of correlational analysis showed a positive correlation between the Extension Program raters and non expert raters (See Table 3). However, no correlation was found between the students' TOEFL scores and essay scores. This is evidence of the fact that there is no relationship between the students' TOEFL scores and students' academic writing

performance. Students performed well high on the TOEFL exam and well below on the essay writing.

The results of the paired Samples T-test showed that there was a significant difference in the mean scores of the essays rated by the Extension Program raters and non expert raters (13.00 and 12.00, respectively) with the T-value of 7.00. Essays written as a supplement to the TOEFL were graded higher by the extension program raters and could not give a true picture of students' academic writing performance.

Before treating pre instruction and post instruction test scores inter rater reliability of all pre instruction and post instruction test items were checked. The correlational analysis revealed that the average agreement between the judges was high. The results are shown in Table 4, and Table 5.

Table 4. 4 The results of Spearman rho correlation between the pre instruction test scores rated by two raters (N=200)

Pre listening and note taking task	Pre summary task	Pre outline task	Pre data commentary task	Pre essay task
.97**	.87**	.87**	.68**	.73**

Table 4. 5 The results of Spearman rho correlation between the post instruction test scores rated by two raters (N=200)

Post listening and note taking task	Post summary task	Post outline task	Post data commentary task	Post essay task
.78**	.90**	.74**	.67**	.89**

As the aim of this study was to investigate the effectiveness of the writing course on students' academic writing performance, paired Samples T-test was used to compare the

students' performance in the pre instruction and post instruction tests, pre and post tests for instructed skills, and pre and post tests for uninstructed skills.

The results of the T-test showed a significant difference in case of the pre and post instruction test scores in favor of the post instruction test scores (T-observed value is -10.44). It should be mentioned that there was a significant difference in case of pre and post tests for instructed skills (summary writing, data commentary and essay writing) in favor of the post test, T observed value is (-12.37); there was also a significant difference in case of the pre and post tests for uninstructed skills in favor of the post test (*listening to the lecture and note taking*, and *outlining)*, T observed value is (5.54) This implies that students did fairly well on the skills for which they did not receive any instructions during the course, but improvement was obtained as a crossover from the instructed skills.

The next step was to correlate pre and post tests for instructed skills and pre and post tests for uninstructed skills with the PBT TOEFL scores to see the relationship between the test scores and PBT TOEFL scores (See Table 6).

Table 4. 6 The result of Pearson Correlation between the Pre and Post tests for instructed skills and uninstructed skills with PBT TOEFL scores (N=200)

	TOEFL	pre test for instructed skills	pre test for uninstructed skills	post test for instructed skills	post test for uninstructed skills
TOEFL	1	.257**	.339**	.276**	.189**
pre test for instructed skills		1	.650**	.463**	.216**
pre test for uninstructed skills			1	.340**	.380**
post test for instructed skills				1	398**
post test for uninstructed skills					1

The results of the Pearson's correlation showed a low positive correlation in case of the pre and post tests for instructed skills (.46), the pre and post tests for uninstructed skills (.38) and the PBT TOEFL scores. These results have strong implications. The low positive correlations indicate that students improved to different degrees. This is also an indicative that there is no relationship between the PBT TOEFL scores and the pre and post instruction tests, which let us conclude that PBT TOEFL scores can hardly give the true picture of the students' academic writing performance.

The next part of the data analysis aimed to measure the difference between the final test scores of the three groups. There were 12 groups of students which were divided among three instructors; each instructor had four groups to teach. Conventionally, we'll agree to call the four groups taught by each of the instructors as Group 1, Group 2 and Group 3.

Table 4.7 Descriptive Statistics for the Groups

Groups	Mean	SD
Group 1	36.162	1.029
Group 2	30.89	1.107
Group 3	34.67	1.124

As can be seen in Table 7, there is a significant difference between the mean scores of the groups. This means that students in different groups showed different progress.

Table 4.8. **Tests of Between –Subject Effects**

Source	Type ‖‖ Sum Of Squares	d.f.	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	993,118[a]	2	496,559	6,337	.002
Intercept	228619,306	1	228619,306	29,378	.002
GROUP	993,118	2	496,559	**6,337**	.002
Error	15437,837	197	78,365		
Total	247835,000	200			
Corrected Total	16430,955	199			

R Squared =.060 (Adjusted R Squared =.051)

The results of the final test scores of the groups taught by each of the three instructors were compared using one way repeated measure ANOVA. The mean scores of the groups taught by three different instructors (F ratio: 6.33; exceeds F-critical: 3.89; $P<.05$) showed significant differences (See Table 8).

The Pairwise Comparisons Tests (see Table 9) show the degree of difference between the groups. There was a significant difference between the mean score of the Group 1 and 2 (5.272*) in favor of Group 1. There was a significant difference between the mean scores of Group 2 and Group 3 (-3.787*) in favor of Group 3. It should be noted that no significant difference was found between the mean scores of Group 1 and Group 3(1.48).

Table 4.9 Pairwise Comparisons
Dependent Variable: SCORES

(I)GROUP	(J)GROUP	Mean Difference (I-J)	Sig.[a]
Group 1	Group 2	5.272*	.001
	Group 3	1.485	.331
Group 2	Group 1	-5.272*	.001
	Group 3	-3.787*	.017
Group 3	Group 1	-1.485	.331
	Group 2	3.787*	.017

Based on estimated marginal means
*.The mean difference is significant at .05 level.
a. Adjustment for multiple comparisons: Least significant Difference (equivalent to no adjustment).

Chapter 5: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

This study showed a number of interesting outcomes. Overall, the findings showed that the supplementary essays were graded significantly higher by the Extension Program raters, which questions consequential validity of the essay scores. There should be a correspondence between the score received for the entrance essay test and its value in terms of the intended performance.

There was a statistically significant progress in the students' academic writing skills at the end of the writing course. However, the progress could be more if all the groups showed equally good performance. The results of the post test showed that the writing course indirectly improved even those academic study skills, for which the students did not receive any instructions. Another important outcome of this study is that the incoming students at AUA with a little knowledge of such basic academic skills as note taking, outlining, and summary writing. Hence, all these skills need to be taught.

Low correlations between students' TOEFL scores and their pre and post instruction academic test scores on the one hand and very low correlation between students' TOEFL scores and supplementary essay scores indicated that the PBT TOEFL does not satisfactorily measure academic skills.

5.1 Limitations

Like any other study this research has its limitations. The students were notified that the pre instruction and post instruction tests would be carried out for the research purposes only, which could have affected the students' attitude towards test taking. Had they been told

that the test results would affect their grades they could have been more careful in their writing.

Had an evaluative survey questionnaire been conducted at the end of the writing course it would have given an understanding of the effectiveness of the writing course from the point of view of students.

5.2 Suggestions for further research

The results of this study suggest several themes for further research. The analysis of data showed that there was very low correlation between the TOEFL scores and entrance essay scores. Finding out the reasons of the low correlation between the TOEFL scores and entrance essay scores and students' writing abilities is the subject for further research.

Another area of investigation is the identification of academic writing skills that students may possess in their mother tongue, which can be transferred into English.

5.3. Recommendations

Writing, especially study skills writing is too complex an ability to be boosted up in a short period of five weeks. It is recommended that:

1)   students go through a longer and more solid writing course before embarking on their graduate studies

2)   students should take IBT TOEFL or other standardized tests that are designed to measure students' ability in academic context

3)   students should be streamed to writing classes according to their proficiency level

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Pre-test

<div align="center">

American University of Armenia

Department of English Programs

Writing Course

</div>

Level: - advanced   Time: 80ms.

First name, last name _____

Task 1
Directions for taking notes from lectures (6points)
Listen to the lecture, take notes on the most important points, and write a short passage about the main points. You will hear the lecture only once and at a normal speaking rate, so concentrate on what is being said as you write. Your passage should include no more than 150 words.

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____.

Task2
Directions for summarizing (6points)
Write a summary of the text. Your summary should include no more than 200 words and should illustrate your understanding of the main idea and supporting ideas.

Fashionable Decisions
Neil J. Anderson, 2002

One of the first decisions many people make in the morning is what to wear. Our clothes make a statement about our individual style and beliefs; they can also say something about our musical tastes, or our cultural identity. Fashion trends change not only with the seasons but also annually, with new styles being introduced, as well as old ones revived, on the catwalks of Paris, Milan, London, and New York. Looking back at changes in clothing styles over the past few decades, it seems that fashion trends tend to occur in cycles. What was fashionable twenty years ago, for example, may come back into fashion again in the near future. You only have to pick up any fashion magazine to find lists of what is considered 'in' or 'out' of fashion at the moment.

Fashion trends are influenced by more than just a few well-known clothing designers. Celebrities such as movie stars, pop musicians, and royalty also influence which fashions are 'trends'. In the 1950s, Elvis Presley's style was copied by millions around the world. White T-shirts, parent leather shoes, and slicked-back hair were the essentials for young men of the day. Young women in the 1950s dressed in poodle skirts and cat's – eye glasses. Miniskirts and go-go boots, worn by pop stars and fashion models of the day, were the must-have for young women in the 1960s; the shorter the skirt, the trendier you were considered to be.

One particular style popular in the 90s was the 'retro' look. Many young people chose to dress in clothing styles of the 1960s and 1970s, or combined different elements of these past

fashions with modern trends. As a result, many independent stores opened that specialized in the selling old, used clothing from decades ago.

Fashion is, therefore, a means of self-expression. As the British designer Katherine Hamnett said, "Clothes create a wordless means of communication that we all understand". One of the first decisions that you make each day communicates a powerful statement about who you are, and what you believe in.

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Task 3
Directions for outlining (6points)
Read the following passage and make your own plan or outline.

Owning a Car

Should a person own a car? This is an important question. In a large urban area, there are some good reasons for owning a car. First, a car allows a person to move around freely. With a car, there is no need to check a bus schedule or wait for a train. Second, a car is comfortable way to travel, especially in the wintertime. In bad weather, the driver stays warm and dry, while the poor bus or train rider might have to stand in the rain. Finally, a driver is usually safe in a car at night. The rider might need to walk down a dark street to get to a stop, or wait on a dark corner.

There are, on the other hand, many good reasons against owning a car. First, it can be very expensive. The price of fuel continues to rise and car insurance can cost three or four hundred dollars a year. In addition, it is expensive to maintain and repair a car. A simple tune-up can cost $50. In an urban area, it might also be expansive to park the car. Second, owning a car can cause worry and stress. It is exhausting to drive in rush – hour traffic, or to drive around and around looking for a parking space. If you leave car on the street, it might get stolen. That is something else to worry about. Finally, everyone needs to think about pollution and energy problems. Air pollution and noise pollution increase as more and more people drive cars. More and more cars also burn more and more fuel. At present, drivers may have to wait in long lines at filling stations in order to buy a couple of gallons of gasoline.

Should a person in an urban area own a car? In order to answer the question, a person must weigh both sides. On the other hand, there is freedom of movement, comfort, and safety. On the other hand, there is expense, worry, and concern for the quality of life. For many people in large cities, the reasons against owning a car outweigh the reasons for owning a car. Therefore, the answer is negative: A person in an urban area should not own a car.

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Task4

Directions for data commentary (2points)

Look at the following charts and figure out the difference between these two charts by describing them.

A. This chart shows what the single worst influence is that faces today's teens.
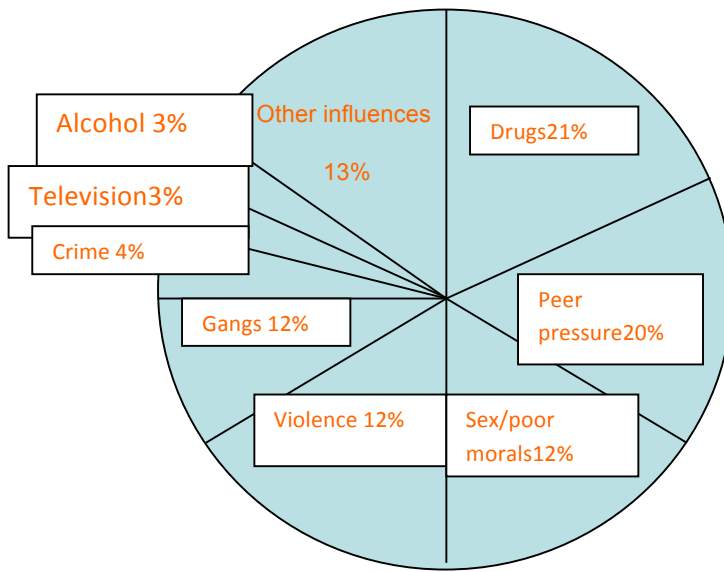
B. This figure shows what teens want most from life.

Boys
Girls

The first columns of each section represent boys' responses, whereas the second ones for the girls. 32

23   18   8 11   11   9 6   7 7   3 1   2 2   1 2

Happiness   Long/ enjoyable Life   Marriage/ family   Financial success   Career success   Religious satisfaction   Friends   Health   Education

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Task 5
Directions for structuring an essay (20points)
You have 30 minutes to write an essay on the following topic given below. Your essay should have five paragraphs: introduction, conclusion and three body paragraphs.

How can an understanding of various cultures help us in our personal and professional lives? Use your own experience and the experiences of people you know or have read about to improve your points.

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Appendix 2: Post-test

Writing Course

Level: - advanced
Time: 80ms.

First name, Last name _____

Task 1

As you are listening to the lecture, take notes on the most important points and then organize your notes into a summary. Your summary should include no more than 150. (12points)

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Task 2

Write a summary of the following text. Your summary should include no more than 200 words and should illustrate your understanding of the main idea and supporting ideas. (15 points)

The Anger Factor

Not long ago, letting rage out was, well, all the rage. Now, studies suggest that venting may up the heart-attack risk. In the 1980's, doctors often suggested that waving your anger like a flag was good for the head, and cleansing for the soul.

Now, though, the advice is changing: Some recent scientific studies have shown that venting hostility can stir up stress hormones in your body in a way that, ultimately, could damage your heart. A study by Dr. Murray Mittleman and his colleagues at Harvard Medical School-published this month in the journal Circulation-suggests, for instance, that an angry outburst can more than double the risk of a heart attack in some people.

And Dr. Redford Williams of Duke University-who has been studying about 100 lawyers for decades in an ongoing look at stress-has found that the attorneys who said their anger levels were high in their years as students were four to five times more likely to die in their 50s than their somewhat calmer colleagues.

Richard Friedman, a professor of psychiatry at the State University of New York at Stoney Brook and director of research at the Mind-Body Medical Institute at Harvard, said these studies and others leave little doubt that episodes of anger are dangerous.

"The notion that letting it out is protective," he said, "is not borne out in science." Once a volcanic kind of guy himself, Williams said he has learned to ask questions about his anger, and now lets steam out in less explosive ways. At Duke, Williams has studied the long-term effects of hostility for years, but now is also trying to determine the day-by-day events that contribute to heart disease. For one thing, he says he's finding not just to the real-life kind that's known to cause fight-or-flight hormones to surge, but also to 'Rambo' –style movies.

Williams has men and women watch violent and nonviolent clips from movies- "Sleeping with the Enemy" –while hooking them up to blood pressure cuffs and other monitoring devices. The scientists also drew blood to test stress hormone levels.

With violence, blood pressure moves up from 2 to 6 millimeters. What's more, the doze of violence triggers a higher blood pressure surge when an on-screen argument turns into an arm-swinging wrestle. These cardiovascular changes occur only when people are watching violence carried out by someone of the same sex, suggesting that they identify more with the character.

"When you consider how many people watch a movie, and half the population watching it are having a rise in blood pressure, it is important to worry. Over time, that cumulative extra workload could be contributing to an increased risk for cardiovascular disease," Williams said.

Source: Jamie Talan, "The anger Factor," Los Angeles Times, September 19, 1995, 3E.

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Task 3

Outline the following passage in a topic outline form. (18points)

My Messy study

My study is an almost uncontrollable mess everywhere I look. Beginning on the west side of the room, where I sit at my cluttered desk and look through dirty windows to a tangle of trees that almost conceals the beautiful bay, I can also see a mishmash of picture postcards tacked to the wall and buttons declaring such mottos as "Support Your Right to Arm Bears" attached to the drapery above the desk.

Turning north in this smallish room, I can view one of the two floor-to ceiling bookcases the room contains. Besides a disarray of books, the bookcase is crowded with antique toys, paperweights, bottles, seashells, and photographs. Reams of paper, assorted envelopes, bills, and old letters are also stuffed into the bookcase, though they are almost falling to the floor.

The east side of my study contains closets, and the closet doors are busy with old Dutch shipping posters, the photograph of a French cathedral, the cover of a museum magazine picturing reclining Holstein cows, and some of my favorite cartoons. An old thermometer is jammed next to the door to the room, also located on the east side, and the door itself is almost concealed by museum posters.

The south side of the room contains the second bookcase, where the only semblance of order is in the uniform rows of encyclopedias and Great Books. Otherwise, books are stacked every which way, together with assorted artifacts such as a teddy bear squashed against two volumes of folklore, a bud vase leaning perilously, and the figurine of "Speak No Evil, Hear No Evil, See No Evil" about to sail out at me where I sit at my typewriter. There is also a single bed, a low table, and a canvas chair on the south side of the room, all covered with books and papers. The one sometimes clear space in my study is a second chair that I now occupy, turned to the typewriter table next to my desk. As I type this paragraph, I must

constantly reassemble the papers beside my typewriter lest its movement jiggle them to the floor.

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Task4

Look at the following charts and write a short passage in the space provided below describing the information given in them. (3 points)

(A) The first chart shows students' preferences in learning grammar.

50%	35%	15%	10%
Through Grammar rules followed by exercises	Through gr. rules & communicative practice	Followed by gr. rules through communicative practice	Without gr. rules through communicative practice

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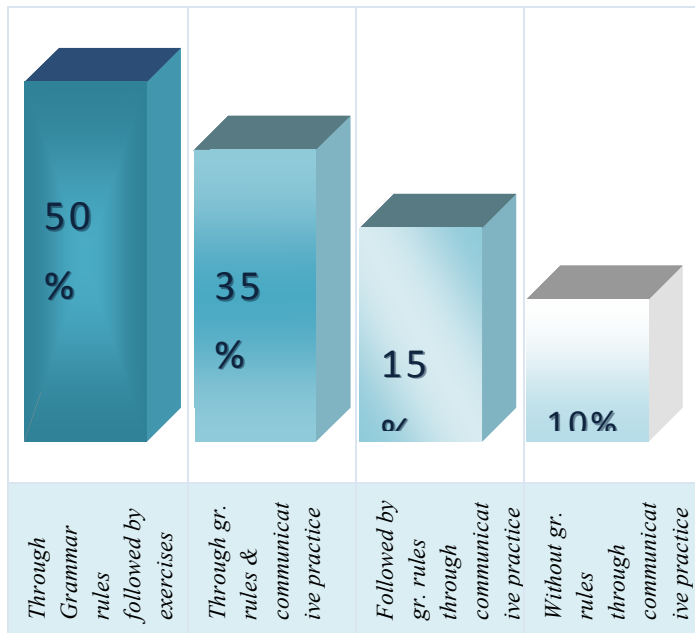
(B) This chart shows the reasons for AUA students' desire to know grammar well. Describe in a few sentences in the space below what these reasons are.

For being professionally

For self-confidence 18%

For improved TOEFL score

For self-esteem 10%

For good job

For communication

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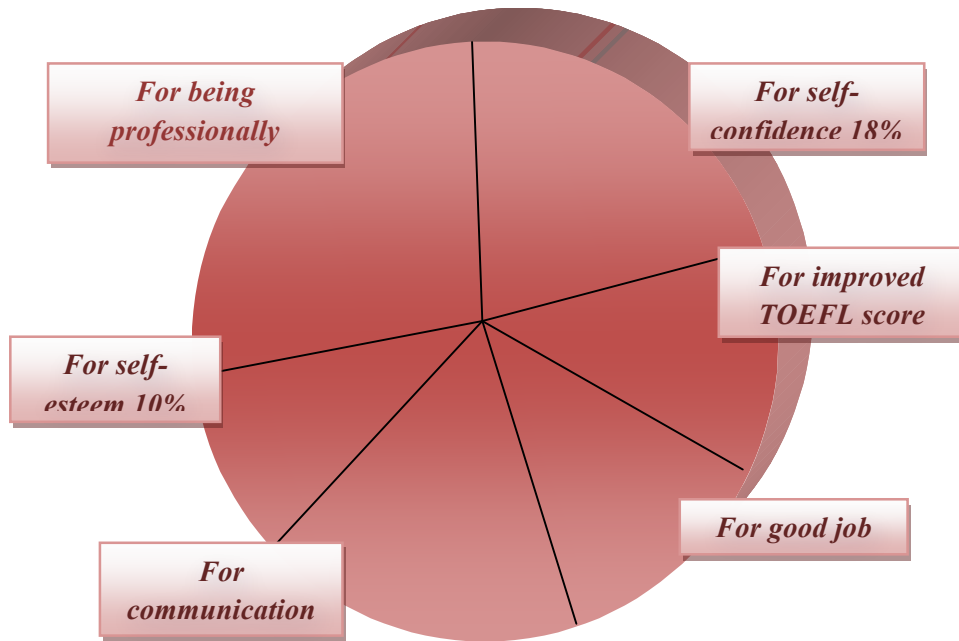
Task5

You have 30 minutes to write an essay on one of the topics given below. Your essay should include an introduction, conclusion, and three main paragraphs. Do you agree or disagree with the statement in (A) or (B). Choose only one. (20 points)

(A) Business should do everything possible to make a profit. Use strong arguments and give examples to support your answer.

(B) One should never judge a person by his/her appearance. Use specific details and reasons to support your answer.

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Appendix 3. AUA composition rating scale (Maximum20 points)

CONTENT
6: a. the essay fulfills the assignment well and treats the topic with sophistication. The main idea is clear.
b. Statements are relevant, well-supported, and credible.
5: a. the essay addresses the assignment appropriately and is well-developed. The main idea is clear.
b. the assignments are relevant, and most are well-supported.
4: a. the essay addresses the topic appropriately, but contains some weaknesses in development; OR the essay only addresses part of the topic, but develops that part sufficiently.
b. Statements are generally supported and related to the main idea, but may contain weaknesses.
3: a. the essay contains some weaknesses in addressing the topic and in development.
b. some statements are not supported or are unrelated to the main idea.
2: a. the essay is inappropriate to the assigned topic or the main idea is not evident.
b. the essay contains many unsupported or irrelevant statements.
1. a. the essay is inappropriate to the assigned topic, AND the main idea is not evident.
b. statements are unsupported, and ideas are not developed at all.
RHETORICAL CONTROL

6: a. there is a clear organizational plan evident throughout the essay. Introduction and conclusion effectively fulfill their separate purposes: The introduction effectively orients the reader to the topic by providing background information and stating a clear thesis and the conclusion reinforce the thesis.

b. Paragraphs are separate, yet cohesive, logical units with clear topic sentences. Sentences form a well-connected series of ideas or logical steps with clarity and efficiency.

5: a. There is a clear organizational plan. The introduction presents the controlling idea, gives the reader the necessary background information, and orients the reader, although there may be some lack of originality in the presentation. The conclusion restates the controlling idea but may be somewhat formulaic.

b. Paragraphs are usually logically developed and cohesive. Sentences are usually well-connected.

4: a. An attempt at an organizational plan is clear. Introduction presents the controlling but may do so mechanically or may not orient the reader to the topic effectively. The conclusion attempts to reinforce thesis, but may give the reader some extraneous information, or may be overly brief and formulaic.

b. Paragraphs are somewhat developed, but may contain some weaknesses. There may be some weakness in transitions and/or topic sentences. Sentences may not always be well-connected.

3: a. Organizational plan may be somewhat unclear. Introduction may contain some evidence of a controlling idea, but may not be stated efficiently, or may not sufficiently orient the reader to the topic. Conclusion has a connection to the controlling idea, but may contain extraneous information or may be merely a restatement of the thesis and nothing more.

b. Paragraphs are sometimes incompletely or illogically developed, or may not contain effective transitions. Sentences may not be well-connected.
2: a. Organizational plan is unclear. Introduction and conclusion do not contain the controlling idea. Introduction fails to orient the reader adequately, and the conclusion may not be tied to the rest of the essay.
b. Paragraphs are often incompletely or illogically developed and contain very few transitions, and sentences are not well-connected.
1: a. There is no evident organizational plan. Introduction and conclusion are missing or unrelated to rest of the essay.
b. There is no attempt to divide the essay into conceptual paragraphs, or the paragraphs are unrelated and the progression of ideas is very difficult to follow.
LANGUAGAE: GRAMMAR
4: Except for rare minor errors (especially articles), the grammar is native like.
3: Very few errors in verb agreement, verb form and/ or word form. Few inappropriate incomplete sentences. Errors never obscure meaning.
2: Some errors in verb agreement, verb form and/or form, and may contain some inappropriate incomplete sentences. Errors rarely obscure meaning.
1: Frequent errors in all areas of grammar which sometimes interfere with communication, although there is knowledge of basic sentence structure.
VOCABULARY STYLE & REGISTER

4: a. There is an effective balance of simple and complex sentence patterns with coordination and subordination.
b. Excellent, near-native academic vocabulary and register. Virtually no problems with word choice.
3: a. There is usually a good balance of simple and complex sentences both appropriately constructed.
b. Generally, there is appropriate use of academic vocabulary and register with some errors in word choice or writing is fluent and native-like but sometimes lacks appropriate academic register and sophisticated vocabulary.
2: a. Reliance on simple sentences, or a few complex ones that are too long to process.
b. There may be problems with word choice; vocabulary is at times inaccurate or imprecise. Register may at times lack a proper level of sophistication.
1: a. General reliance on simple sentence structure; complex/compound sentences are infrequent.
b. Frequent problems with word choice; vocabulary often inaccurate or imprecise. Register consistently lacks a proper level of sophistication.

Appendix 4.1. Evaluation form for <u>note-taking</u>

Regarding the note-taking (Maximum 2 points, for each criterion 0.5 points)

Relationship between main ideas and supporting ideas is well explained	**0.5**
All the key issues/points and supporting ideas are included	**0.5**
Symbols and abbreviations are used to indicate main ideas, supporting ideas, supporting details	**0.5**
Phrases used fit the context and are concise	**0.5**

Appendix 4.2. Note taking evaluation form (Maximum 12 points)

Category	3 points	2 points	1 point	0 point
Content	A response at this level successfully separates the main ideas from supporting details	A response at this level is generally good in separating the main ideas from supporting details	A response at this level somewhat separates the main ideas from supporting details	A response at this level doesn't separate main ideas from supporting details
Organization	Details are placed in a logical order and the way they are presented effectively keeps the interest of the reader	Details are placed in a logical order, but the way they are presented sometimes makes the writing less interesting	Some details are not in a logical or expected order, and this distracts the reader	Many details are not in a logical or expected order. There is little sense that the writing is organized
Language	Occasional language errors don't result in inaccurate or imprecise presentation of the content or connections	Minor language errors don't obscure meanings in conveying the ideas and connections	Errors of usage or grammar may be more frequent or may result in noticeably vague expressions or obscured meanings in conveying ideas and connections	The language level of the response is so low that it is difficult to derive meaning
Length of the summary	The writer follows the word limit instructions for the assignment (130-150)	The writer follows the word limit instructions for the assignment (100-120)	The writer follows the word limit instructions for the assignment (50-100)	The writer writes fewer than 50 words

Appendix 5. Summary evaluation form (Maximum 15 points)

	3 points	2 points	1 point	0 point
Main Idea	Main idea is clearly identified	Correctly identifies most of main idea in a complete sentence	Identifies a detail but not the main idea	Main idea is not clear
Organization	Student organizes the information into a logical format, smoothly transitioning from point to point. Summary has a clearly developed introduction (including the source of information), body and conclusion.	Student organizes information into an orderly format, using some transition words to move from one concept to the next. Summary has an indication of an introductory statement, (including the source of information), body and concluding statement.	Student organizes information in a somewhat disconnected or random fashion. Summary lacks two of the following points: the source of information, an introduction, body or conclusion.	Student organizes information in a disconnected fashion. Summary doesn't include any of the following points: the source of information, an introduction, body or conclusion.
Language	Writing is clear and expressive. Sentences connect with a natural flow. Few mechanical errors occur. Student uses her/his own words in a natural way.	Writing is understandable. Sentences are complete, but may be mechanical. Errors do not interfere with understanding. Student mostly uses his/her own words.	Writing is somewhat unclear or simplistic. Sentences are somewhat awkward and choppy Errors interfere with meaning. Student copies much of the content from the reading	Writing is unclear. Sentences are awkward and choppy. Errors make writing difficult to interpret, or student copies most of the content from the reading selection.

			selection.	
Length of summary	The writer follows the word limit instructions for the assignment (200-150 words)	The writer follows the word limit instructions for the assignment (100-150)	The writer follows the word limit instructions for the assignment (50-100)	The writer writes fewer than 50 words.

Appendix 6. Outline Rubric (Maximum 18 points)

CATEGORY	3 points	2 points	1 point	0 point
Heading/Title	Title is at the top of the outline and is centered on the page with proper capitalization	Title is on outline with proper capitalization, but not centered	Title is on outline, but not capitalized and/or centered	No Title
Roman Numerals	Main ideas are outlined properly with Roman numerals	Some main ideas are missing Roman numerals	Many main ideas are missing Roman numerals	Roman numerals are not evident in the outline
Capital Letters	Letters are used to identify supporting details	The outline is missing some letters to help identify supporting details	The outline is missing many letters to help identify supporting details	Letters are not evident in the outline. It is difficult to determine where the supporting details are.
Numbers and lower case letters	Numbers and/or lower case letters are used to identify supporting details	The outline is missing some numbers and/or lower case letters to help identify supporting details	The outline is missing many numbers and/or lower case letters to help identify supporting details	Numbers and/or lower case letters are not evident in the outline. It is difficult to determine where the supporting details are.
Main Details and Supporting details	Relevant and quality details give reader important information about the topic.	Supporting details and information are relevant, but one key point is unsupported or left out.	Supporting details and information are relevant, but some key information is unsupported or left out.	Supporting details and information are typically unclear or not related to the topic.
Amount of Information	4 main points with at least 7 supporting details	3main points with at least 5 supporting details	2 main points with at least 3 supporting details	1 main point with at least 1-2 supporting details

Appendix 7. Evaluation form for <u>chart description</u> (maximum 3 points, each 0.5)

The focus and scope of the figure/chart is well stated	**0.5**
Data is presented in a reader friendly manner	**0.5**
Appropriate comments are provided to signpost significant features	**0.5**
Vocabulary used is at an appropriate level for the intended audience	**0.5**
Implications, problems, exceptions are discussed	**0.5**
Conclusions proposed are based on well-informed discussion	**0.5**