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Yusuf M. Shudooh

B.A. English Depart. – Yarmouk University- Jordan 1984 M.A. English Depart. – Yarmouk University- Jordan 1988 M.A. Linguistics Depart. – University of Wisconsin – Madison 1996 M.A. English Dept. – University of Wisconsin – Madison 1999

Committee Chair: Piyush Swami, Ph.D.

The Application of Computers in Developmental Writing Classes ABSTRACT

The application of computers in writing classes is a relatively new paradigm in education. The adoption of computers in writing classes is gaining ground in many universities, especially in the United States. There were numerous issues that were addressed when conducting computer-assisted courses. However, there were not many studies conducted to assess students' reactions, perceptions, attitude and development in such courses. A qualitative quantitative study was designed at a large campus at a Midwestern University to highlight details about students' attitude and development by using multiple sources of data. Both qualitative and quantitative data were collected during the academic year 2002. Data sources include surveys and questionnaires, e-mail messages between the students and the instructor, students' visits and responses to the Blackboard-based course web-page, and students' portfolios that include all the students' acts of writing over a time span of an academic quarter. Qualitative data were analyzed using grounded theory principles. Content analysis was applied to find out the type of electronic and hard-copy response interaction between the students and the instructor and the students themselves. This study employed grounded theory that could reside within the constructivist belief system. As for quantitative data, a Repeated Measure Multivariate Analysis with ANOVA was applied to find out the statistical differences between the groups of this study that uses the same population.

Eleven students who were enrolled in a Preparatory Composition course at the University College in a Midwestern University participate in this study. The study focused on the student' experience with this computer-assisted course as taught via

Blackboard. To attain a deeper understanding of the students' learning experience in this course, the study looked at how students respond to the instructions delivered by the instructor through the 'Blackboard' platform, the computer-assisted learning environment created by the instructor, the learning materials or feedbacks provided online or offline, the nature of interactions, sources of motivation, and the students' cognitive development throughout the course.

The findings indicated that computer-assisted learning helps students become independent learners. They also indicated that students' individual differences and learning styles affected the students' performance in the course. Some of the findings aligned with other research studies. These include: (a) readiness of resources (b) students' transition to the web-based learning (c) course and time flexibility was a very positive aspect.

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Dedication

This work is dedicated to my parents, family and friends for their patience, caring, love and support.

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All thanks are due to Allah SWT who created, sustained and gave guidance. I would like to express my sincere thanks and deepest gratitude to professor Piyush Swami, who supervised this study, for his willing guidance, constant support and informative reviews and comments that contributed to the success of this work. My profound gratitude is also forwarded to professor Jonathan Alexander for sharing his class and knowledge in the field of computers and composition, constant support and fruitful reviews and comments. My deep appreciation and sincere thanks are also due to professor Terry Bullock for his guidance, enlightening suggestions, constant support and profitable reviews and comments. My special thanks are also extended to professor Alfred Ciani for his help.

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The Application of Computers in Developmental Writing Classes

Chapter 1

Introduction

Research in the area of computer-mediated communication (CMC) and instruction has shown that using technology can provide students with a sense of empowerment and development of communicative abilities. It develops confidence in the students' learning abilities. However, research on the effects of using technology in teaching writing courses is still in its infancy.

The concept of computer-mediated education (CME), i.e. the different manifestations of students taking courses via technology at the university level is not a new one. In fact, instruction across much of the curriculum has been available via modem and public access television for years now. Thanks to increasing opportunities for interaction on the Internet, it is becoming possible not only to transmit instruction, but also to facilitate communicative and collaborative learning for our 'writing students'.

A snapshot at college classrooms in general gives an image of a physical space (a room) with four walls, located in a building on a certain campus. Normally, this room is filled with desks and chairs, which face a chalkboard (or each other), and there is an overhead projector screen or a map rolled up and stored on the wall above the chalkboard. In this room you find a teacher and a group of students who interact during the scope of a class period.

Until recently, this description would, for the most part, be considered acceptable when explaining the concept of a 'classroom'. However, the use of the traditional

classroom, described above, is no longer the only 'optimal' setting for teaching and learning. With the advent of educational technology, an 'optimal' classroom requires adequate technological aids, computers in particular to facilitate the learning process (See Mende, 1997, Powers, & Mitchell, 1997, Roybler, 2000, Rogers, & Kappus, 1995, and Schutte, 1996). In fact, the 'optimal' classroom is one, which teachers and students create, specifically to suit their own purposes and needs, and can change as the needs require. Communication between instructors and their students in such classrooms can take place either synchronously (at the same time), asynchronously (at different times), or both.

Ideally, the purpose of both the traditional and 'optimal' classrooms is to provide a space in which the facilitation of learning, and learning itself, can take place. If we accept that the role of the classroom, whether traditional or 'optimal', is to offer students an environment in which to learn, then we, as educators, should ask ourselves: how we can best utilize both environments, and create a curriculum that can accommodate these requirements for the benefit of our students. How we can impact students' learning by applying technology (teaching efficacy). How we can make education efficient, and how we can bring the world into the classroom. The Internet can be utilized to achieve this goal. Burgstahler (1997) noted that "The Internet is a powerful, flexible and efficient tool for delivering instruction. It provides new ways for us to teach and learn. It allows us to do new things, as well as to do traditional things in new ways (p. 63)."

Some of the aspects of this case study are: the application of technology (teaching efficacy), learning environment, access to technology, training, teaching style, developmental issues, students' language proficiency, and self-efficacy. A major goal of

this study is to explore how each of these factors impacts the subjects' progress throughout a developmental writing course offered by a University College at a large campus in a Midwestern University.

This case study was not intended to talk about how to equip writing classrooms with online computers, because previous research has extensively talked about that matter. What this study hopes to do is pointing out the areas of difficulty for developmental writers and how computers can help in overcoming all or some of these difficulties. From the outset, I would like to make it clear that what I mean by the general term "computer" is the combination of 'Word Processing', the prepackaged educational website called 'Blackboard' and the 'External Links and Internet'. These platforms, as well as the 'Discussion Board', which is part of 'Blackboard', will be used interchangeably throughout this dissertation. The study also hopes to assess the impact of computers on the progress of such computer-aided writing course. Such a study is needed because it connects the various factors surrounding computer-aided writing (CAW) courses tackled by previous research, and analyzes the extent to which the implementation of computers impacts the progress of developmental writing courses.

Some questions that this case study needs to answer are:

- 1. What is special about computer-aided writing classes over traditional writing classes?
- 2. What is the impact of computers on students' progress in writing classes in terms of pedagogy and fluency (language related matters)?
- 3. Do computers empower instructors of writing or not?

- 4. What is the impact of accessing the Internet-based Blackboard platform, particularly its 'Discussion Board', E-mail, and 'External Links' features on developmental writing students?
- 5. What is the impact of training on the students' implementation of computers in writing classes?
- 6. What extra merits can a computer add to the writing class that a traditional class cannot?
- 7. How can we integrate computers into the curriculum of writing classes?

Though the Internet has existed for more than twenty-five years, only recently has its popularity and accessibility motivated researchers to begin exploring its educational value. Writing instructors worldwide are starting to increasingly conduct their classes by using the Internet as a teaching tool. As if in competition with time, more information will become constantly available to help writing instructors make informed decisions about how and why to use the Internet to teach writing courses.

Research Questions

The primary question of this research study is:

How and to what extent does the application of computers in writing classes affect the progress and fluency of developmental writing students? More specifically, what is the effect of using the Internet-based Blackboard platform, particularly its 'Discussion Board', E-mail, and 'External Links' features?

Significance of the Study

Much research has been done on teaching writing courses in general; however, research on the effects of using computers in teaching such courses is still relatively new. This qualitative quantitative study intends to explore the benefits and limitations of teaching university-level developmental writing courses through the Internet-based Blackboard platform, offer suggestions for integrating the Internet into the writing classroom and vice versa, as the case may be. One of the major goals of this study is to provide developmental writing instructors with a framework in which to begin creating new curricula or integrating the Internet into their existing curricula, utilizing it not only as a means of classroom facilitation, but also as a teaching and learning tool in and of itself.

A study of this type may contribute to the examination of the educational benefits of using computers in writing classrooms; it may help in finding ways that build up and develop confidence in the writing abilities of students. It may help in exploring the potential benefits and positive impacts of computers on university-level writing courses.

So, this study will be an attempt to give insights into the effects of applying computers in developmental writing classes. It predicts that dramatic solutions will be explored to solve some of the difficulties that students encounter in basic/developmental writing courses. For example, spelling, grammar, fluency, and lexical problems can be significantly solved by the application of some of the Internet features. The study also predicts that the application of computers can facilitate and reinforce the currently dominant process-oriented approach among students of developmental writing.

Justification & Rationale:

As we move into the 21st century and further into the Information Age, technology is having an unparalleled impact on society since the Industrial Revolution. In fact, the potential impact of one form of modern technology, i.e. the Internet has been likened to that of the printing press 500 years ago (Crawford, 1995; Hemphill, 1995). While access to and interest in the Internet grow, traditional concepts related to work, home, human relationships and education are being dissected and revised as we move into a paradigm shift across all facets of life. Consumers shop without leaving their homes, friends call each other through the computer instead of the telephone, and students have greater opportunities for taking college or university courses online. As a result of the widespread effects of technology throughout the world, it is no surprise that university-level educators are being challenged to rethink and revise their approaches and goals in teaching in order to effectively prepare students for what will be expected of them in the "real world." Black, et. al. (1995) highlight the importance of using computers as educational tools in the sense that students are highly motivated to use and work on them. They draw our attention to its relevance to their future work. They consider it an indispensable skill that they need to acquire as they move into the 21st century. Because the way in which we retrieve and interpret information is changing and evolving, the same applies to education, which prepares students to successfully accomplish such tasks.

So, it is crucial for teachers these days not only to have technical but pedagogical proficiency in the use of computers in the classroom. Governor 'Wilson' of California approved a report on information technology in 1995. The report indicated that by the

Fall of 1997, new teachers would only be certified if they meet "rigorous standards for teacher competency in computer-based applications and their effective use in the classroom." Moreover, the Governor has called for the implementation of in-service training for already-licensed teachers. In order for these teachers to remain in the California public school system past the year 2000, they must also be able to meet the standards mentioned above.

Limitations of the Study

Some researchers propose that using the Internet puts students who lack interest or skill in writing and/or computer at a disadvantage (Berge & Collins, 1995; Lundstrom, 1995). Lundstrom (1995) points out that the quality of English found on the Internet is often non-conventional, and may actually hinder students' language proficiency. Actually, other than their strictly personal and casual interactions, students can develop formal literacies via computer-mediated discussions.

Other potential limitations of the study are the following:

- The population will be limited to (11) basic/developmental writing students.
- Some of the items used in the Appendixes B, C, D, and E are not restricted to this study. Actually, they are intended for further and complementary research beyond this case study.
- Conclusions and recommendations of the study are restricted to the population surveyed.

Definition of Technical Terms Used in This Study:

General familiarity with the following terms will help readers follow references to specific functions of the computer throughout this dissertation. Meanings will become clearer through examples of their application.

Asynchronous:

Asynchronous communication such as email, listserv and discussion board allows interaction to occur at different times and locations between two or more learners. This type of interaction does not take place simultaneously.

Blackboard:

A software developed by universities to offer courses online to students. It provides students with course-related information such as: announcements, course information, staff information, course documents, assignments, books, communication, discussion board, external links and student tools.

Computer Mediated Communication/Education (CMC/E):

CMC/E describes computer applications that facilitate communication and/or education. Examples include electronic mail, computer conferencing, and electronic bulletin and discussion boards.

Discussion Board/Conference:

Users post asynchronous messages to be read and responded to by a larger group of people. Responses are connected by subject matter, and can be read one after the other. Bulletin Boards can be public (open to any Internet user) or private (open only to members of a particular group, e.g. a class).

Discussion List/Listserv:

Through e-mail, participants form groups to discuss (asynchronously) topics related to particular themes. Users send to one address an e-mail message, which is distributed to all subscribers of that list.

Electronic Mail (e-mail):

Users send and receive individual written messages. It is the online equivalent of sending a letter through the regular mail (though much faster). This type of communication is asynchronous, as the writer and reader do not need to be online at the same time. In fact, it takes several minutes for an e-mail message to be delivered.

External Links:

A function in the blackboard software that Links learners with the outside world.

File-Transfer Protocol (FTP):

Function through which users can transfer files from their Internet accounts to their computer hard drives (or a floppy disk), and vice versa. For example, FTP allows users to

write a document (e.g. an e-mail message) with a word processor and then upload (transfer) it to the Internet. Users can also do the reverse, downloading information directly from the Internet to a computer hard drive or floppy disk.

Hypertext:

The term "hypertext" was coined by Nelson in 1974 to describe "non-sequential documents" composed of text, audio, and visual information (Heinich, et al., 1999). In other words, hypertext is non-linear text that consists of units of information called chunks, fragments, cards, frames, folders, or most common unit is "pages" documents. In many cases, the node consists of a single screen of text.

Synchronous:

An environment through which learners communicate synchronously in real time, as in classroom discussions. In this case interaction between participants is simultaneous.

Web-based courses:

Web-based courses (online courses) are courses that are taught using the Internet with the bulk of content, activities and interactions occurring online.

World Wide Web (WWW):

A worldwide `library' of pages of pictures, text, data, graphics, audio and video connected through keyword links. Through WWW, users can view documents, and then connect to other related documents anywhere in the world by clicking the mouse on a word or phrase. Popular software interface, such as Netscape or Internet Explorer, facilitate the navigation and use of the WWW. Every organization and even every individual user of the WWW can create a home page that contains whatever information they want to present. The hypertext capabilities of the WWW facilitate the linking of information within one's home page with all other home pages on the WWW.

Chapter 2

Review of Literature

The literature reviewed for this study includes material both in print, i.e. books, journal articles, etc., and online. This review of literature, which is related to the implementation of computers in writing classes is meant to demonstrate that there is a substantial literature base to justify the implementation of this research study. The review presents a brief explanation of the idea of switching from a traditional writing classroom to a computer-aided writing (CAW) classroom. A good part of this review of literature is dedicated to the factors that play significant roles in (CAW) classes. This review is never comprehensive, nor is it meant to be.

With the introduction of Computer Aided/Mediated Communication/Education (CMC/CAE) into the field of education in the late 1960s, there is a noticeable paradigm shift in education at all levels. Mason, Robin & Kaye (1989) provide an overview of the research and experimentation in teaching and learning with CMC during the 1980s. That is, the courses that are developed at one particular time and accessed by students at another time. This type of education is called "time and/or place independent", which basically represents an asynchronous system, that is not done in real-time. Other names of this type of education are virtual classroom, online education, CommonSpace, etc. This of course, allows students greater flexibility in scheduling efforts and in the learning process in general.

Some of the barriers to change from the traditional writing classes to the CAW classrooms are changes that require some modifications of existing beliefs.

Administrators, instructors and students need to change their attitude towards the application of computers in writing classes. There is a need to change teaching styles and curricula to incorporate using computers as tools in writing classes. When various computer-aided classes are reviewed, similarities begin to emerge. Based on certain similarities, the following factors can be distinguished: (1) Instructor's attitude (2) Students' level, proficiency and attitude (3) Teaching style (4) Environment (5) Training (6) Teaching/Instructor's efficacy (7) Access. There might be some overlap between these factors. However, even a brief review of the literature reveals enough evidence to justify identifying each factor as separate.

Sandholtz, Ringstaff, and Dwyer's (1997) stated certain stages of instructional evolution. This study takes for granted the first four of the stated stages; these are: (1) Entry (2) Adoption (3) Adaptation (4) Appropriation. This study starts basically with the fifth stage, which is **'invention'**, where the instructor changes his/her classroom into a student-centered, individualized, collaborative, project-based learning environment. Normally, these are the five stages through which instructors move as they transfer from instructor-centered lecture-based instruction to a more student-based dynamic mode of instruction. The first stage **'entry'** is a period of initiation when instructors are approaching the practice of using computers for instruction with either fear or enthusiasm. The second stage is **'adoption'** during which instructors essentially use computers as an add-on. That is an attempt to manipulate technology to fit existing teaching strategies. The third stage **'adaptation'** sees technology being integrated to a much greater degree. Practically, traditional teaching techniques stay very much in place, but instructors start to see some real possibilities for the new technology. The major

theme of adaptation is productivity. Instructors realize that they may be able to accomplish more through the use of technology than with traditional approaches. The fourth stage **'appropriation'** is when the instructors master the technology to the extent that their attitude toward technology starts to change. At the end of 'appropriation', instructors can no longer imagine teaching without technology, i.e. the new practices gain ground or replace the old ones. By the time instructors get to the fifth stage, which is **'invention'**, they redress their classrooms into a fully student-centered, individualized, collaborative, project-based learning environments. Since the focus of this study is on the last part of the fourth stage, and the whole fifth stage, this study will concentrate on the evaluation and progress of student learning through this growth in instructional techniques.

Instructors' Attitude Towards the Application of Computers:

The literature for the last twenty years has touched on many aspects of instructors' attitudes toward computers. Some of the aspects explored for instructors such as age, gender, computer experience, computer ownership, and training have also been explored for other professions and for the general population. Other issues, such as the value of computers as instructional tools and attitudes toward implementing computers as a regular part of the curriculum, are more specific to the teaching profession. The change of attitude on the part of administrators, instructors and students, however, is crucial for further application of computers in writing classes.

Age does not seem to be a factor that significantly impacts attitudes about computers in general for either instructors or students. Dyck and Smither (1994) found

that when experience was controlled for, there is no difference between the attitudes of younger and older adults. Likewise both older and younger instructors have positive attitudes about computers (Dupagne & Krendl, 1992; Greenberg, Raphael, Keller & Tobias, 1998). With regard to gender, Chen (1986) found that girls believe that females are just as capable of successfully using computers as males, but at the same time they hold a more negative attitude about computers. Dyck & Smither (1994) found that when experience was controlled for, there was no difference between the attitudes of males and females. Research also shows that there is no difference between the attitudes of male and female instructors (Dupagne & Krendl, 1992). Another similarity between instructors and the general population, particularly students, is that experience has positive impact on attitudes about computers (Chen 1986; Dupagne & Krendl 1992; Dyck & Smither 1994; Levine & Donitsa-Schmidt, 1997; Greenberg et al. 1998). Computer ownership also positively influenced the attitudes of instructors (Dupagne & Krendl 1992; Yildirim, 2000). Finally there is a great deal of evidence that when instructors take part in computer training opportunities, their attitude towards computers become more positive (Madsen & Sebastiani 1987; Dupagne & Krendl 1992; Anderson & Reed 1998; Yildirim 2000).

As far as the positive attitude of implementing computers in the writing classroom (Dupagne & Krendl 1992) is concerned, Greenberg et al. (1998) found out that instructors, regardless of their level of use, had positive attitudes about students' abilities to learn with computers. Several studies found that instructors believed there are many positive uses for computers in education (Reed 1986; Woodrow 1987; Ertmer 1999, Ross & Woods 1999). Reed (1986), and Kellenberger (1996) stated that instructors felt that using computers in schools helped prepare students for the future.

While there is much evidence that teachers value the contribution computers can make to their classrooms, there is also evidence that they have some concerns. Dupagne and Krendl (1992) found that teachers are concerned about the availability of hardware and of quality software, the time required to successfully implement them as instructional tools, and the lack of training on the part of both instructors and students. Instructors are also concerned about misuses of computers for playing games, using computers to simply keep students occupied, substituting computers for direct teaching, spending money on computers that could be spent on more traditional materials, superficial instruction, and insufficient funds to purchase updated software.

Students' level, proficiency and attitude:

Students' linguistic levels, their language proficiency, and their attitude play significant roles in either motivating, or impeding them from applying computers in their writing classes. Research has recurrently showed that, overall, students have a positive reaction towards the use of computers in language classrooms. In a case study that attempts to assess the students' attitude towards computers in language classrooms, Boyd & Davis (1995) found out that on a 5-point Likert scale where 1 = very negative and 5 = very positive, the student mean was 3.92, which is relatively high.

Bloch, and Brutt-Griffler (2001) conducted a study that focused on how teachers implemented software for composition classroom purposes and how their students responded to the implementation. The focus was on human-computer interaction (HCI). The study took a yearlong implementation of CommonSpace in L2 writing environment for undergraduate and graduate writers in an ESL writing composition program at a large Midwestern University.

The researchers concluded that the CommonSpace as a tool for students' negotiation and construction of meaning could be successfully incorporated into L2 composition methodology. The general conclusions that were reached by this study were: (1) that in comparison to similar classes that did not have this component, some of the class time was devoted to learning how to use computers, the Internet, and e-mail. That is because many students came from countries where these technologies were not pervasive. (2) the software provided a means by which teachers could write clear and concise comments that could be read and understood by students. (3) the software facilitated peer review by enabling students to send files to each other regardless of what platform they were using; or, students could respond to each other simply by exchanging seats in a computer lab. (4) the software provided an environment for students in which they could easily access external links, such as writing handbooks, or online dictionaries. (5) the software allowed for the electronic exchange of papers, which broke down some of the constraints of time and space for both teachers and students.

Sankar (2000) investigated student attitudes about Web vs. lecture formats and how they affect learning outcome. Attitudes toward the Web along with learning strategies were measured using a survey and learning performance by test scores. The findings suggest that students tend to enroll in the format according to their attitude and learning strategies. When they do not, learning outcomes are adversely affected. ESL students who were recent immigrants preferred the Web format. The conclusion is that

matching course formats with students' attitudes and learning strategies enhances learning performance.

Computers become immense libraries of sound materials for language learning classrooms. With careful planning, instructors can use the Web in the classroom to help learners improve their different language skills (Silc (1998). In her Dissertation, Ozen (2000) concluded that online learning paves the way for students to become independent learners. Independent learning in the sense that traditional learning in no way can provide. In their research on implementing Common-Space (basically the Internet) in the ESL composition classroom, Bloch & Hirvela (2001) indicated that despite occasional reservations, the use of computers has permeated the composition process. They argued that exchanging papers with other students as well as easily accessing resources such as writing handbooks through external links could enrich students' language proficiency. Reading papers on the computer screen, various drafts of papers, and comments from both the instructor and peers could develop a particular reading-writing environment for students. This environment is in the heart of the process-oriented approach, which is the most widely used approach in writing classes up today. The application of computers would also help students make positive use of collaborative learning. Moreover, it helps students to track their own linguistic capabilities and language proficiency.

Teaching Style:

Much has been written about appropriate pedagogies as they relate to the implementation of computers as instructional tools. The consensus is that a student-centered approach is the most effective way to integrate technology into the curriculum.

Swan and Mitrani (1993) found that classrooms become more student centered when computer-based instruction is used, and that students receive more individualized instruction. There are also more individualized interactions than with whole-group instruction, and that instructor-initiated interactions are considerably lower. Likewise, Emerson (1998) reported that computer-based instruction is highly interactive and individualized. Similarly, Mandinach and Cline (1996) report that instruction-involving technology is more interactive and that teachers serve as facilitators rather than content experts. The same as Swan and Mitriani (1993), Waxman and Huang (1996) found that the use of technology results in less whole class instruction and more independent work. They also found that using technology increases on task behavior. Robin and Harris (1998) indicated that computer-using educators are more learner centered in their instructional approaches than otherwise.

Environment:

The impact of educational environment must be considered in any serious examination of factors that encourage instructors' progress toward implementing educational technology as part of their daily practice. Computers are no longer an innovation in colleges or even high schools. So, administration most probably does not give the implementation of computers in their institutions a second thought. There is a common understanding and a clear set of goals regarding the importance of computers these days among stakeholders in educational institutions. The availability of on-site technical support for instructors increases the amount of time computers are used by students in the classroom; it also serves as a reliable predictor for the level of use (Fuller,

2000; Wiesenmayer & Koul, 1999). Collegial support serves as another avenue through which instructors are successfully encouraged to implement new innovations (Joyce & Showers 1983; Greenberg et al. 1998; Wiesenmayer & Koul 1999).

Training:

Despite the fact that one of the barriers that keep instructors and students from effectively using computers as an instructional tool is training on the part of both of them. Literature suggests that training does indeed make a difference. Actually, technology and pedagogy are inseparable in this respect. So, an effective staff development addresses technological and pedagogical issues together. Reports by Gressard and Loyd (1985), and Baird, Ellis and Kuerbis (1989) indicate that training improves teachers' attitudes about using computers in the classroom.

This case study, however, presupposes that both instructors and students have adequate training to handle whatever required from them in a developmental writing course, at least regarding word processing and Internet surfing. While helpful and important, any further training is beyond the scope of this study.

Teaching/Instructor Efficacy:

Personal teaching efficacy is the belief that instructors hold in their ability to impact student learning (Gaith & Yaghi, 1997). These researchers showed that personal teaching efficacy is tied to instructors' willingness to try new innovations. Kellenberger (1996) reported that self-efficacy built on past success is tied to teachers' beliefs that they will be able to help students use computers in the classroom and influence students'

interest in computers. Actually, students' usage and interest is not suffice by itself. As educators, we are always aiming at an effective use of computers on the part of both students and instructors.

Access:

Literature repeatedly points to access as a major factor in implementing computers as instructional tools. Access could be an issue in terms of the number of computers, or in terms of the location of the computers within the class or the computer lab. It is also an issue in terms of the availability of relevant software and Internet connections. Access also improves instructors' and students' attitudes about the role of computers in education.

This study, however, presupposes that both instructors and students have an easy access to computers and Internet. As university students, everybody has a free access to both computers and Internet, and the absolute majority, if not all, has the same free service at home throughout their own PCs. This easy accessibility made computers more like a routine part of their educational process. Actually, computers are becoming an integral part of college students' curricular and/or extracurricular activities.

Effectiveness of Computer-Assisted/Aided Education (CAE):

Research has shown that computer-assisted education (CAE) has an advantage over traditional education. Schutte (1996) and Teeter (1997) have conducted two different studies to compare a traditional classroom and web-based instruction learning. The results of Schutte's study indicated that the (CAE) class referred to as the 'virtual' class scored an average of 20% higher than the traditional class in examinations. Teeter's study showed that benefits observed from the computer-assisted (CA) course included higher student motivation, exposure to extended resources, and improved quality of discussion and written assignments. Students in the (CA) course did equally well as students in the classroom course on examinations. Russell (1998) found no significant differences in learning outcomes, when looking only at the medium of delivering instruction. The only difference between the (CA) course and the classroom course was the medium of information transmission.

Carlson (1997) conducted a study to look at the effectiveness of (CA) teaching using a 'virtual' classroom environment. Also examined are techniques that college professors can use to make their students feel involved in the class as a community. An example of a (CA) course offered at a corporation during the summer of 1997 is described. An informal survey of the seventeen student participants revealed that all but one of them enjoyed the (CA) course format. The majority of students cited convenience and flexibility as advantages of the course; major disadvantages were lack of oral communication in class discussions. Also, Guernsey (1998) states that students enrolled in regular college classes are taking (CA) courses for convenience. Critics say students choosing (CA) courses are not getting the education they pay for, and question whether universities should be providing such instruction.

Powers and Mitchell (1997) studied student perceptions and performance in a Web-based course. They found that many students perceived the Internet format to be more time consuming and continued to prefer the lecture format. Students felt there was lack of the classroom-community spirit. To compensate for this, some of the students

engaged in email and listservs more often, used the Internet relay chat facilities to build a classroom community in the virtual space. The effect of the student attitudes on the learning performance was inconclusive.

Sankaran, S. (2000) did an empirical study on Web vs. Lecture instruction. This study investigated student attitudes about Web vs. lecture formats and how they affect learning outcome. Differences in attitudes to formats among various ethnic groups and ESL students are also examined. Attitudes toward Web along with learning strategies were measured using a survey and learning performance by test scores.

The subjects for this study were students enrolled in an accelerated 4-week undergraduate business computer course. At the beginning of the course, the students chose either Web or lecture format. The instructor covered the same course content in both formats. The web format contained power point slides with condensed narration and a bulletin board called Hypernews. The instructor held office hours using the Internet Relay Chat and exchanged assignments and feedback via e-mail. The students were given a pre-test to measure their knowledge of course content. As a measure of performance, all students took the same final at the end of the course in a lecture hall.

The findings of the study suggest that students tend to enroll in the format according to their attitude and learning strategies. When they don not, learning outcomes are adversely affected. There were no statistical differences in attitude to Web due to ethnicity; however, ESL students who were recent immigrants preferred the Web format. The conclusion is that matching course formats with students' attitudes and learning strategies enhances learning performance.

In her summary, the researcher concluded that understanding of student attitudes to course delivery formats and how they match with learning strategies to enhance overall learning outcome is important in Internet-based education. She also does not approve of the one-format fits all approach currently employed by many universities. This is not effective especially when students differ in their individual background characteristics. Actually, administrators who propose that students learn equally in any format unintentionally employ the agricultural-botany paradigm that all students respond to a course as consistently as plants react to fertilizers (Willis, 1994). In real life, even when course format and content are the same, individual students learn differently. One reason for this outcome can be attributed to differences in background variables such as attitude to the course format, learning strategies, ethnicity and English as Second Language (Billings, 1989; Hoeksema, 1995; Ede et al., 1998; Rong and Preissle, 1998).

The Role of Computer-Assisted Writing Centers/Labs (CAWCs/ CAWLs):

A survey of the role of computer-assisted centers/labs (CAWCs/CAWLs) shows that during the 1980s and 1990s, educators have actively examined how to adapt emerging computer technology to existing pedagogical practices. In the 1980's, there was a debate on whether it was appropriate to provide computers for student access within the writing center environment. In the 1990s, computers have become an accepted tool in writing centers, almost as integral to the setting as chairs and tables.

Scharton, M. (1989) wrote an article entitled "*The Third Person: The Role of the Computers in Writing Centers*". He addressed how the computer influenced writing classes. Using four case histories, he depicted what he considered "the four most

important areas in which computers affect the process of tutoring other writers: tutor-toclient dialogue, macro structural revision, surface editing, and printing" (p. 37). His central argument is similar to Pamela (1987), who argued that writers could revise text so easily that students experience writing as a fun and experimental process rather than an unpleasant task. With the computer at their side, tutors also work more comfortably as facilitators; they experience less pressure to help students manufacture their writing. Farrell claimed that "The computer seems to act as a catalyst to open the dialogue necessary for an effective tutor-writer relationship" (p. 32).

Scharton advances Farrell's notion, though, because in one of his scenarios he describes an interaction that explicitly predicts the development of the (CA) writing lab. He recounts working with a student who requested help learning to use the computer and ended up getting assistance with writing as well. In his experience, however, he reported moving a step beyond the traditional tutor/student conversational exchange. As he was providing computer tutorial advice, Scharton would also type commentary and questions in 'caps lock' concerning the content of the draft. He reported that he and the student would often write back and forth to each other about the ideas. Although the consultation did not take place in a formal networked environment, the technique of intermingling commentary throughout the draft later became a convention of (CAWCs). Scharton indicated that "the effects of computers are as various as the personalities and intentions of the people who use them" (p. 47). Like Farrell, his article ended by encouraging the reader to make use of the tremendous potentials of the technology.

Scharton and Neuleib (1990) wrote an article entitled "Tutors and Computers, an Easy Alliance." They discussed a survey they conducted of writing center tutors in which
tutors were asked how the advent of computers had altered their composing and tutoring strategies. They found that nearly all of their tutors use word processors in their own writing and that in performing tutorials, the tutors assume that revisions will be made electronically. Scharton and Neuleib concluded that tutorials have become more flexible and productive since students have been able to visualize changes to their text and alter them immediately using a computer. The most important aspect of this article is that it admits that "the potential for extending center services through electronics is just beginning to be understood" (p. 50).

Balester, V. (1992) published an article entitled "Transforming the Writing Center with Computers". She suggested a more specific focus about the possibility for (CA) writing, although some of her points were underdeveloped and her claims unsubstantiated. In contrast to some articles from 1990s, which consider the possibility of extending traditional writing center philosophy into a virtual environment, Balester insists that the underpinnings of writing center theory must change to make effective use of promising computer technology. She foresees that instead of relying on traditional one-on-one exchanges, virtual writing centers will sponsor undercover student tutors who participate in (CA) class discussions about writing. Balester proposes that this will keep individual tutors from gaining a voice of authority and will encourage students to develop their voices in a community of writers while unknowingly benefiting from the insights of a knowledgeable, trained moderator besides the instructor.

Harris & Pemberton (1995) co-authored an article about (CAWLs). Their article is considered among the best overviews so far about conceiving a good (CAWL). They briefly describe the major approaches in synchronous and asynchronous communications that are utilized to extend one-to-one writing assistance into virtual communities. They

caution against trying to simply reproduce face-to-face tutorials in an (CA) environment. They advocate putting a great deal of planning into extending a writing center into a networked environment. Using a straightforward language, Harris and Pemberton explore several angles of the topic. They discuss the most frequently employed options for providing writing tutorials in a network environment, explaining each of them (e-mail, WWW, newsgroups, and synchronous chat systems) in terms of an original "model of computer interactions". Harris and Pemberton also briefly discuss other topics relevant to constructing a worthwhile Computer-Assisted Writing Center (CAWC), including "user access, network security, computer illiteracy, institutional missions, writing center goals, computing center priorities, and computer programmers' attitudes" (p. 145).

An integral part of Harris's philosophy is that writing centers have a duty to assist students as they prepare to enter a technologically advanced information society. The spirit of her commentary is that writing centers need to be willing to develop and change along with the new technology. Although her comments are not particularly detailed, they provide a worthwhile informal glimpse of the role of the (CAWC) in a prominent traditional writing center.

Coogan, D. (1995) published an article entitled "E-Mail Tutoring: a New Way to Do New Work". The article specifically highlights a common form of CA Writing: email tutoring. It consists of three main sections: First, he gives a history of the relationship between writing (centers) and computers. Second, he speaks in theoretical terms about employing e-mail to perform consultations. He believes that the exchange of ideas by electronic means allows writers to engage in productive dialogue about a workable text. He admires the fact that communicating in writing allows writers and

tutors to exchange ideas more honestly and frankly, and encourages each of them to take risks. The third section of the article is a case study of his own experience as a tutor and instructor who applies CAW in his classes. Coogan admits that there is a great deal of potential in this medium of writing, particularly in its ability to break down barriers between formal and informal writing, but like Healy (1995), he cautions against embracing it without thinking through the implications.

Jordan-Henley and Maid (1995) published an article entitled with "Tutoring in Cyberspace: Student Impact and College/University Collaboration". In this article, the authors reflect on their experiences as facilitators of a program in which community college students asynchronously submitted drafts of their papers via e-mail to graduate students at a university writing center and then met for a synchronous writing consultation in a virtual writing center. The article reviews the graduate students' experiences of adapting face-to-face tutoring concepts to CA tutoring; it includes the community college students' feedback about the service. Although the discussion is almost entirely subjective, the authors offer some good analysis based on their experience. They highlight the possibility of using this technology to find experienced and capable tutors for remote sites or smaller schools. They also indicate that both e-mail and synchronous communication provoked successful revisions in the students' essays and that cyber tutors indicated no best preference about which format was more valuable, though many were more accustomed to e-mail.

Palmquist, Kiefer and Zimmerman (1995) published an article developing a computer-assisted writing center. It illustrates the degree to which the concept of the CALs had penetrated contemporary writing center theory. The authors give an insightful

account of using a writing center as a base of operations for a writing-across-thecurriculum program. They discuss how their CA writing center with its extensive offerings, ranging from CA tutorials to chat programs to electronic bulletin/discussion boards, contributed to the success of the Writing and Computer (WAC) program. The virtual writing center, with its increased visibility and feasibility, attracted both students and faculty. Palmquist et al offer further details about the logistics of coordinating WAC and CAL, information that would prove useful to those who wish to undertake a similar linkage.

Flannery Silc (1998) published an article entitled with "Using the World Wide Web with Adult ESL Learners". The study was primarily developed for the military, and then adopted by universities as a medium for research and a source for authentic language learning experiences. The article highlights the importance of the Internet as a network that links computers all over the world through listservs, bulletin/discussion boards, and newsgroups in English as a second language (ESL) and foreign language classrooms.

This article presents reasons for using World Wide Web activities in adult ESL instruction. It addresses the issue of preparing learners to use the Web, and suggests activities that use authentic learning experiences to enhance skills. The article mentioned some of the language skills with which learners can interact in order to build basic language skills that can be developed through the World Wide Web. For example, a number of websites were created especially for English learners and contain exercises in grammar, vocabulary, writing, or reading (e.g., Lingua Center Grammar Safari http://deil.lang.uiuc.edu/web.pages/grammarsafari.html.

To develop reading skills, learners can employ hyperlinked menus where they can review both prose literacy (narrative) and document literacy (charts and graphs). Writing is of course a natural response to Web reading as learners respond to articles, request further information on topics, register complaints, and provide information about themselves. Channels of communication inevitably open up among students when they were using computers both individually or in groups (DeVillar & Faltis, 1991).

The article concludes that The World Wide Web is an immense library of authentic materials for the language-learning classroom. With careful planning, ESL instructors can use the Web in the adult classroom to help prepare learners for the workforce, to introduce them to different cultures, and to help them improve their English language skills.

Boyd and Davis (1996) conducted a study entitled "The Impact of Selected Computer Resources in High School Spanish and French Classes". The purpose of this study was to examine the effectiveness of using word processing and Internet resources on the achievement, writing quality, and attitudes of fourth-year language students. A non-randomized two-group pretest-posttest design was used to compare achievement, writing, and attitude differences between foreign language students who use computer resources and those who do not. In addition to data collected using a traditional experimental design, qualitative interview and observation methods were used.

The researchers hypothesized that Spanish IV and French IV students who write and edit their written work using foreign language spelling and grammar tools, who correspond with 'real-world' audiences on the Internet, and who use computer resources from other countries written in the languages being studied would:

- score higher on standardized and teacher-made achievement tests.
- produce higher quality writing samples.
- exhibit more positive attitudes about learning a foreign language than their counterparts who learn foreign languages in the traditional manner without computer resources.

The results of this study show that:

- Teachers found no major difference in quality between hand-written and computer papers except for appearance or readability and improved spelling. Although students could revise their work more easily, many chose to use the time saved for other purposes than rewriting. In addition, some students did not take advantage of the spelling and grammar-checking feature. They did not examine the choices presented, read the explanations, or note that the computer program did not always recognize errors.
- 2. Although writing did not improve noticeably, students wrote more, and some have started to use mail to correspond with the instructors (in the foreign language). Students also have submitted homework assignments as e-mail attachments rather than printing out a "hard copy." In addition, teachers have started using e-mail to send homework assignments and respond to students.
- 3. Students had a positive attitude to the use of computers in the foreign language classroom. On a 5-point Likert scale where 1 = very negative and 5 = very positive, the student mean was 3.92 (S = .45) on the attitude toward computer

scale. In addition, no significant difference existed between French and Spanish students.

- Students cited three key advantages to writing with the computer: spell and grammar checker, on-line dictionary, faster writing, and a general belief that use of technology in itself was an advantage.
- 5. One specific problem associated with writing by hand was the difficulty with revising by hand in comparison to revising by computer. Approximately 93% selected writing by computer because one could check homework easier, it was faster, papers were easier to revise, papers looked better, and students believed that technology is the future of society.
- 6. Foreign language teachers noted five major positive aspects of using computers to improve students' communication skills:
 - Students could concentrate on ideas rather than mechanics of writing.
 - Students could revise and edit.
 - Students learned new computer skills.
 - Students enjoyed the computer.
 - Students saw "real-life" applications of foreign language in context.

Chapter 3

Methodology

Overview

This chapter throws light on the design of this qualitative quantitative case study, which focused on the learning experience of eleven undergraduate students registered in a developmental writing class. The study was conducted based on interpretive/ constructivist paradigm to trace the progress of the participants in this class. The chapter gives a description of the different stages of the adopted methodology. It also describes the setting of the study in terms of the time, place, facilities, instructor, population, and the course itself. Moreover, it describes the instruments, which basically consist of two questionnaires and a survey, the student papers and their multiple drafts, as well as the field notes. Finally, it describes how data was collected and the procedures and strategies of its analysis.

Research design

Setting of the Study:

A developmental writing class offered by a university college located on a large campus in a Midwestern University. This college, which is part of the English Department was selected as the research site for this case study. It offers service courses for all the university students. The philosophy of the college is characterized by quality instruction and academic excellence.

The Instructor:

The instructor was a very friendly, cooperative and interested professor. He enthusiastically uses the computer in his writing classes. He uses the Internet-based Blackboard platform, particularly its 'Discussion Board', E-mail, and 'External Links'. The same features are also used by other instructors university wide. The instructor is supported by the college administrators in his endeavor.

The Course: Developmental/Basic Writing

Developmental and/or Basic writing will be used interchangeably all through this dissertation. It is basically a web-based course, which is designed for students who plan to move on to higher-level English composition or literacy courses. Students in this course are usually first year undergraduates. The course is a prerequisite for English composition (I). The course provides students with a good background about the rubrics, or the conventions of writing at the college level. This means that toward the end of the course, students have to show proficiency in the following skills: (1) Rhetorical knowledge (2) Critical thinking- reading and writing (3) Processes (4) knowledge of the conventions of college writing.

This study focused on the learning experience of (11) undergraduate students registered in a developmental writing class. While the study is qualitative in nature, quantitative elements are used to address the key issues. A case study is an ideal methodology when a holistic, in-depth investigation is needed (Feagin, Orum & Sjoberg, 1991). This study adopted a qualitative approach so that themes could emerge from indepth understanding and interpretation of the participants' perspectives about a single event (i.e. students' perception about a developmental/basic writing class that is taught through computer).

A qualitative research project can be described as an iterative cycle of three general phases or processes within which five sub-phases (or processes) more specific to critical qualitative research can be identified (Carspecken, 1995; Guba & Lincoln, 1994). The three broad phases are orientation and overview, focused exploration, and member checks (Guba & Lincoln, p. 236). Although these phases should overlap in practice, they are undertaken first, to gather enough information to gain a general understanding of what is salient in the setting. Five sub-phases are more specific to critical qualitative inquiry. Phil Carspecken (1995, pp. 41-44) recommended that after creation of initial research questions a "loosely cyclical" series of stages be followed in the critical qualitative research project: (1) compilation of a primary record (note-taking, audio taping, examination of student papers and online written conversation, collection of background information on students). (2) preliminary reconstructive analysis (examining the aforementioned data for interaction patterns and their meanings, tentatively identifying and articulating some themes or areas of importance in the data that merit closer study). (3) dialogical data generation (intensive conversing with participants through interviewing and discussion groups, generating data with students). (4) describing system relations (seeking to discover relations between the students' experiences with computer in a basic writing course and those of their culture, literacy and their course of study in its broadest sense, looking at the students' understanding of those relations). (5) using system relations as explanations of findings (suggesting

reasons for the experiences and cultural, literacy, or study influences discovered in earlier phases).

Qualitative research is defined by Creswell (1994, pp. 1-2) as "An inquiry process of understanding, a social or human, based on building a complex, holistic picture, formed with words, reporting detailed views of informants, and conducted in a natural setting." Thus, this case study was designed to analyze three of the students' required papers and their multiple drafts. It was also designed to bring out more details from the viewpoints of the participants by using multiple sources of data. Moreover, a thorough understanding of the uniqueness of this case study is a major objective as is the case with any other case study.

This study was conducted based on interpretive/constructivist paradigm since the purpose of the paradigm is to understand the participant's world (Annells, 1996). Denzin and Lincoln (1994) defined qualitative research as an interpretive multi-method approach to the study of people in their natural surroundings. Guba and Lincoln (1994) suggested four underlying "paradigms" for qualitative research: (1) positivism (2) post-positivism (3) critical theory (4) constructivism. Since this study employed grounded theory, this theory can reside within the constructivist belief system (Annells, 1996).

The next section includes descriptions of the following stages of the methodology.

- 1. Protocol of the research study.
- 2. Data Collection.
- 3. Analysis of the evidence.

This study seeks to trace the progress that eleven developmental/basic writing students go through in their (English 099) writing course. The course was given in one of computer labs of their college so as to make it accessible for students to apply computers for every class period (one-hour session each) of the course. There were twenty one (21) computers in that lab. The Internet-based Blackboard platform, particularly its 'Discussion Board', E-mail, and 'External Links' was used in the course. The researcher has a free access to the course material, particularly the 'Discussion Board', which holds a major part of the communications that took place among all participants including the professor during the course. Correlations between the level of use, attitude, proficiency, and appropriateness, as well as the students' progress will be determined. The researcher regularly attended all classes of this course as an unobtrusive observer. Data were collected from that class within the span of an Academic Quarter. During this time, students' interaction with computers, their oral and written interaction with the instructor and among themselves, as well as their writing progress was monitored. Each student's first, second, and final papers as well as their multiple drafts were collected. The students' language errors were identified, categorized, tabulated, and analyzed. Analysis of, and comparison between their earlier and later writing efforts was made. A Likert scale survey and multiple open-ended questionnaires were administered to assess the students' use, proficiency, and attitudes towards the application of computers in this writing course. The SPSS statistical package was used to analyze some of the collected data.

Population of the Study:

The population of this study consisted of an intact class of students. It has been chosen for the following reasons: (1) Basically, this group is taking this writing course through computers (2) Developmental/ Basic writers represent a group of writers who still have skills to master and problems to solve (3) The group encompasses a spectrum of students of various proficiency levels; the group also includes two English as a second language (ESL) students (4) The subjects are at a transitional level between high school and college, so the findings of the study can help at both school and college levels.

Patton (1990, p. 184) stated that "There are no rules for sample size in qualitative inquiry. Sample sizes depend on what you want to know, the purpose of the inquiry, what's at stake, what will be useful, what will have credibility, and what can be done with available time and resources." Initially, there were 13 students participating in this study, but two of them dropped the course. Thus the participants in this study were 11 undergraduate students who were enrolled in this CA "Developmental/Basic Writing" course. The student population was diverse with respect to gender, ethnicity, and culture. Two of the whole group were ESL students. Participants' ages range from 19 to 45. This helped in gaining an in-depth understanding of students' learning experiences with this specific CAW course. The instructor's constant encouragement made it easy and comfortable for students contributing to this study.

Each participant signed a full informed consent (Appendix A) form that included an explanation of the purpose of the study, the methodology, the implications- both positive and negative, the right to anonymity, the human subjects' right to withdraw at any point, and how results were to be used and disseminated. Permission to conduct this

study was obtained from the University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) and the course instructor as well. Confidentiality was preserved by removing all the names of participants from all the written documents. No real names were used in reporting study findings or in the dissertation itself. Participants were referred to as numbers. Further, unidentified excerpts of the students' writings were used to support study findings in this dissertation.

Instruments & Data Sources

In order to build validity and triangulation in this study, it was necessary to use a variety of data collection instruments, reflecting different perspectives within the same situation. This helps to gain detailed information about each student taking this CA developmental/basic writing course. Each data source gives the researcher new insights that help in piecing together the multi-dimensions of the study.

The researcher safely guarantees the validity and reliability of these questionnaires and surveys because (1) they show consistency with the literature regarding the nature of their content (2) they were administered and approved by experts in the field (3) similar questionnaires and surveys were used earlier on by other researchers and investigators. Following are the descriptions of the instruments used to collect data in this study:

(1) Background Questionnaire:

This questionnaire (Appendix B) consisted of (3) parts; they inquire about the following: (1) General information (2) Computer background (6 questions). (3) The

course itself (8 questions). Expert opinion was sought before the application of this questionnaire. Besides, similar questionnaire was used earlier on by other researchers and investigators (Ozen, 2000).

(2) An open-ended Questionnaire:

This questionnaire consists of twenty seven subjective questions. It was designed to elicit information about which features of the Internet-based Blackboard platform the students use most, how they apply these features for this class, whether or not their application saves time and effort, whether the application adds fluency to their writing or not, and the routes or channels of communication they apply in their interactions (Appendix C). Similar questionnaire was used earlier by other researchers (Ibid, 2000).

(3) A Survey about this Computer-Assisted (CA) Experience:

A part from three open-ended questions, this survey consisted of a series of statements/questions using the Likert scale of five choices, which ranged from 'Strongly Agree' to 'Strongly Disagree' and included a 'No Opinion' response category. Most of the items were adopted from the Flashlight Current Student Inventory developed from the Annenberg/CPB Project at the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. Some institutions are licensed to use Flashlight Current Student Inventory for evaluating educational uses of technology as well as the evaluation of web-based courses. This survey was intended to measure the students' perceptions of this technology-based instructional system, i.e. the Internet, the learning environment, the instructional materials, the nature of interactions, sources of motivation, obstacles and setbacks for the students and other issues associated with web-based learning.

"The Flashlight Current Student Inventory was subjected to content validity testing: an 18 month series of focus groups concluded in meetings with students, faculty and administrators from the five Flashlight institutions; this was just after over 2,000 of their students had responded to surveys created with an earlier version of this Inventory" (Flashlight Evaluation Handbook, 1997). However, the Current Student Inventory has not been tested for its reliability. To maintain its content validity, the survey was reviewed by experienced professors in the area of technology. The students were asked to read the statements and select the category, which represented the extent to which they felt the experience to be positive or negative with regard to their learning experience (Appendix D). All the abovementioned Appendices (A, B, C, D, E) were available on the course page on Blackboard platform. Students downloaded them from the course page, filled them in, and submitted them to the researcher. Quantitative data were analyzed with the *SPSS program*.

(4) Evaluation Questionnaire:

This questionnaire was designed to evaluate this CAW course. The questions are basically tailored to elicit students' subjective opinions about the application of computers in this writing course. It consists of two parts: (A) consists of (8) questions, and (B) consists of (2) questions (Appendix E). Similar questionnaire was used earlier by other researchers (Ozen, 2000).

(5) Students' Papers:

All students were required to write (3) papers; multiple drafts, at least three, were required before the final clean copy. Every written act done by the students such as, the required two summaries, peer reviews, the multiple drafts as well as the final clean copies were put in a portfolio. The researcher collected all the portfolios at the end of the course. These were analyzed with the SPSS program.

(6) Observations:

The researcher attended all the class sessions of the course over the span of an academic quarter. The total of thirty classes were taken in the College Computer Lab. The purpose of attending all classes was to write down notes about how the class was conducted. The researcher noted on the nature of interactions that took place between the students and other elements such as the computers, other students and the instructor.

(7) Informal Meetings with the Participants:

All through the quarter, the researcher talked to the students before and after the class session about their perceptions of this web-based writing experience. In so doing, good information and sound field notes were collected about the participants' attitude toward this CAW course. Some of then students' subjective opinions about the course were included in he body of the dissertation.

Other Documents:

Some other data such as (Appendices F, G & H) were collected. Appendix (F) includes information about the syllabus, the textbooks, grading procedures and portfolios. Appendix (G) includes information about the course's daily schedule, daily assignments, hints for choosing topics, hints for brainstorming, suggestions for writing drafts or summaries, journal guidelines, procedures for rewriting papers for students interested in higher grades, due dates and deadlines, and individual conferences in the professor's office. Appendix (H) includes information about Blackboard resources - all these Appendices could be retrieved from the course web page on the Blackboard platform.

The researcher also has an access to the mutual electronic interactions between the professor and the students, and the students themselves that take place on the 'Discussion Board'.

Data Collection Procedures

For the sake of this study, both qualitative and quantitative data were collected over a span of a quarter during the academic year 2001-2002. Qualitative data were collected through: (1) the ethnographic methods of class observation (2) informal meetings with the students (3) the collection of associated documents including the students' three required papers and their multiple drafts. Quantitative data were obtained through the surveys and the students' three required papers. The quantitative data usually point at the focus areas and the qualitative data gave significance to those areas of focus.

Moreover, participants were asked to fill out a course evaluation (Appendix E), an open-ended questionnaire (Appendix C), a background questionnaire for the informants

(Appendix B), and a survey about the course (Appendix D). The instructor created links for all the Appendices, so the links for all of them were available on the Blackboardbased course page.

During the last week of the academic quarter, all the 11 participants turned in the filled out Appendices to the researcher as hard copies. The researcher had full access to the discussions and interactions held on the 'Discussion Board'. All over the academic quarter, the researcher regularly met with the instructor informally to talk about the course.

The observations were conducted regularly for every class session (30 total) over the span of an academic quarter. Each observation session lasted for a class period (one hour each) and resulted in written field notes with detailed accounts of the events observed. Thus, this study included 30 observations. The data collection was completed by the end of the quarter. The collected data allowed the researcher to gain a wide variety of information toward this web-based course and CA learning experience. This provided a sound framework for a qualitative/quantitative case study.

Researcher's Role:

Case researchers usually have many roles to play. Since qualitative research is primarily descriptive and interpretive, the biases and subjective judgments of researchers should be stated explicitly (Creswell, 1994). In this research study, the role of the researcher included serving as a data collector, descriptor, interpreter, analyzer, interviewer and evaluator. Stake (1995) believes that a case study is partially a search for the merits and shortcomings of a case. This belief is in line with the objectives of any

'program evaluation', which are primarily discovering the merits and shortcomings of that program. The emphasis of a qualitative study is normally on the quality of activities and processes applied in it. These are usually presented in narrative descriptions and interpretive techniques.

Strategies for triangulation:

A case study is known as a triangulated research strategy. According to Stake (1995) the protocols that are used to ensure accuracy and alternative explanations are called triangulation. The need for triangulation arises from the ethical need to confirm the validity of the processes applied in case studies, that could be done by using multiple sources of data (Yin, 1994). Triangulation increases the reliability of the data and the process of gathering it. Denzin (1984) identified four types of triangulation:

- Data source triangulation, when the researcher looks for the data to remain the same in different contexts.
- Investigator triangulation, when several investigators examine the same phenomenon.
- Theory triangulation, when investigators with different viewpoints interpret the same results.
- Methodological triangulation, when one approach is followed by another, to increase confidence in the interpretation.

In this study, the variety of data sources and the combination of methodologies

using both quantitative and qualitative approaches strengthened this study through triangulation. To insure credibility, the researcher adopts a position of neutrality regarding the case under study. Every measure was made to remain neutral and objective, and to understand the subject under investigation during the study. Thus, to eliminate biases of the researcher, analyses were conducted straight through the various facets of description and classification to connect concepts that give an overall account of the observable experience. In going over and analyzing the students' papers, the researcher adopted the portfolio-scoring guide (Appendix I) developed by all the professors who teach Composition/Writing courses at the University College.

This triangulation confirms findings of the impacts of CAW courses on students, from the point of view of not only the researcher, but the students as well. In addition, I received ongoing feedback on all aspects of my research project from the professor who was concurrently conducting other CAW classes. Lastly, the aspect of this study, which builds the most internal validity is my direct and continuous involvement with this writing course. Since I attended all the classes, I had an internal view of what took place in this classroom. This fact helped me to show both an internal and external picture of this basic writing experience.

External validity is hard to attain in a single case study. Yin (1994) asserted that external validity could be achieved from theoretical relationships; from these relationships, generalizations could be made. In this particular study, external validity has been built in several ways. First, I need to remind the reader that using the Internet-based Blackboard Platform was not the only classroom influence, which had an effect on the

students. In fact, the instructor, classmates, course/class materials, and other factors involved- all had major impacts on the confidence and writing ability of the students in this study. Therefore, rather than conducting a quantitative study in which the use of computers is isolated as an independent variable and prove or disprove its impact on students, this study accepts that the impacts of computer use are in relation to the other factors involved concurrently, such as those mentioned above. Second, two of the participants were ESL students, who are coming from two different ethnic and cultural backgrounds. Thus, it is realistic to expect that the findings of this study could be applicable to similar ESL learning situations worldwide.

Data Analysis

Procedures for Data Analysis:

Following the guidance provided by related literature on methods of data analysis, two kinds of data were basically analyzed in this study. These are: five surveys and the three required papers and their multiple drafts. Bogdan and Biklen (1997) indicate that data analysis is a constant process and an integral part of data collection. In this study, the data analysis was truly a constant process that ultimately guided the direction of the study. This constant analysis paved the way for more clarity, modification and refinement of information.

The three required papers and their multiple drafts (at least three drafts for each paper) were reviewed and graded initially by the instructor. Since this research is done on a registered university course, the researcher will apply the well-defined grading rules

followed by the instructor of the course, and the Language Arts Department (LAD) portfolio review committee as an instrument (Appendix I). Thus, the instrument will be designed by categorizing the types of mistakes students commit in this writing course. The researcher did not question the validity and reliability of the instrument because it adopted the consensus of the LAD review committee, which includes the instructors of writing in the University College, as to what is considered as a mistake or shortcoming in the students' writing. So, the validity of the instrument is already evaluated and approved by the same panel of professors, who teach similar writing courses in the same college. The same papers and their multiple drafts were reviewed once more by the researcher in order to identify the errors, code them, categorize them, quantify them, and analyze them.

Strategies for Analysis

Content Analysis:

As an integral part of content analysis, the researcher looked at the content of the students' email messages and Discussion Board postings to determine the nature of interactions that took place during the course. Content analysis provided some inferences about the participants' capabilities, attitudes and the nature of their emails and posted messages. Content analysis is a form of quantitative research, but it differs from traditional quantitative research because it can be applied to text. In this respect, content analysis combines the flexibility of traditional qualitative research with the statistical dimension of quantitative research. According to Schwandt (1997) content analysis is a generic name for a variety of textual analyses that typically involves comparing, contrasting and categorizing a set of data.

In this study, the basic content analysis was that of students' papers and their multiple drafts. **First**, each student's portfolio was given a number. **Second**, each language-related errors/problem in a paper or a draft was identified, coded, classified, and categorized. **Third**, the frequencies of the errors/problems in each of the student's papers and drafts were measured. **Finally**, upon these inputs, a statistical analysis was made. Repeated measure analysis with ANOVA was used to trace the students' writing's progress overtime.

As in all research studies, considerations must be given to construct validity, internal validity, external validity, and reliability (Yin, 1989). In this study, using multiple sources of evidence such as questionnaires and surveys about the application of computers in this class (Appendices B, C, D, E) ensured construct validity (Yin, 1994). As mentioned earlier, the researcher safely guarantees the validity and reliability of these questionnaires and surveys because (1) they show consistency with the literature regarding the nature of their content (2) they were administered and approved by experts in the field (3) similar questionnaires and surveys were used earlier on by other researchers and investigators. The data of some of the Appendices (D & E) were analyzed to determine which of the factors view the application of computers in writing classes as effective or ineffective, helpful or unhelpful.

Moreover, the researcher referred to the 'course statistics' provided by the "Blackboard' platform. The overall statistics about students were the following: (1) Total number of accesses per area (2) Number of accesses over time (3) User accesses per hour of the day (4) User accesses per day of the week (5) Total accesses by user. Upon these

information, inter and intra-correlations between these statistical findings and the students' performances were made.

Creating Categories

Data analysis in a case study is practically a search for meaning (Stake, 1995). Stake (1995) suggested two strategies to reach meaning about cases. One of them is direct interpretation of the individual instances. The researcher concentrates on the instance, trying to take it apart and put it back together again in a more or better meaningful way. When taking the case apart, the researcher seeks to make sense of certain parts and reflects on them deeply. The other strategy is categorical aggregation. The researcher kept aggregating instances until something can be said about them. Basically, case studies rely on both of these methods, but usually most of the time is spent on direct interpretation in intrinsic case studies. As for data analysis in qualitative research, Creswell (1994, p. 153) points out that, "Data analysis requires that researcher be comfortable with developing categories and making comparisons and contrasts. It also requires that the researcher be open to possibilities and see contrary or alternative explanations for the findings".

This study employed both direct interpretation and categorical aggregation methods. Efforts were made to understand individual instances of behavior, issues, and contexts in the case. Meanwhile, patterns and themes were expected to emerge from aggregating frequencies and consistencies from the data, generating categories, and comparing and contrasting them. Thus, similar properties of data were grouped together to make comparing the bits within each group accessible. So, the researcher compared

and contrasted the data within each group looking for similarities or differences within these data. The researcher also made comparisons between the different groups, again looking for patterns or variations in the data. Moreover, creating categories provided the researcher an opportunity to examine the data both conceptually and empirically.

The Repeated Measure Analysis with ANOVA

As mentioned earlier, each student was given a chance to write each paper at least three (3) times; this means that each student has written the total of nine (9) drafts. So, a Repeated Measure Multivariate with ANOVA was applied to determine whether there were significant differences between the first and the following drafts of each paper.

Chapter 4

Findings

This chapter identifies the experiences and perceptions of eleven students, who were enrolled in a Computer Assisted Developmental Writing Course – English 099 offered by a college in a big campus of a Midwestern University. The source of data included a set of open-ended questionnaires: evaluative and background, a survey, observations of all the class sessions, field notes from the class and the students, and three major papers and their multiple drafts required for this course.

1. How did students respond to the instructional system delivering materials through the Internet-based Blackboard Platform?

Students' Computer Technology Experience:

A total of eleven students completed a Background Questionnaire (Appendix B). All the students were comfortable and confident that the course will not demand more than their already known computer skills. Actually this course does not require more than the average computer literacy that is crucial for the progress of any college student. The interview, the background questionnaire and the survey all support the findings that the students in the study had adequate experience to take this computer-assisted course.

Instructional System:

Two instructional systems were applied in this course: synchronous and asynchronous. The web-based Blackboard's utilities, particularly its 'Discussion Board'

and the email were the main asynchronous delivery systems that connected the instructor to the students. 'External Links' was an invaluable source that connects students with other communities of writers through <<u>www.powa.org</u>>. Students, also, had a chance to interact with the instructor synchronously in the classroom. The professor was always there to help students all through the course. He was accessible to the students during all the course's class sessions and his office hours.

Students indicated that the application of computers gave them a lot of flexibility to do work for this course at a suitable time. They found that writing with the computer was more convenient than the traditional way of pencil/pen and paper. Some students emphasized that the indispensable 'equipment' for writing such as dictionaries and grammar helpers were available on the web. Whenever such 'equipment' are needed, students were able to access them simultaneously and limitlessly. Student # (5) once said *"I know that dictionaries and grammar helpers are there; all I need is to use them more and more."*

During the introductory class of the course, the instructor made it clear to the students that the course would be basically conducted through the computer and in the Computer Lab. Although the syllabus was on the course web page, he distributed a hard copy of the syllabus among the students. He went over the prerequisites, parameters and goals of the course. He demonstrated how to access the course page by using the Microsoft Internet Explorer. He told the students about the routes of communication for this class; these include e-mail, discussion board, the class sessions and his office hours. He asked the students to subscribe to the listserv of this developmental writing course – English 099. He talked about the computer lab facilities and suggested that the 'Writing

Labs' (L 221, L 209 & L 4221) would be excellent places to visit fairly frequently. Appendix (J) gives a good idea about the learning atmosphere of the Writing Lab and the nature of interactions that took place there. The instructor answered all of the students' questions and listened to their concerns. He also told them that a researcher (me) would conduct his research on 'the application of computers in writing classes', i.e. on this particular class. After listening to all this, it was noticeable that the students were motivated for this new experience. All through the course, face-to-face meetings with the instructor provided guidance, individual help and facilitated students' learning with the help of computers.

The University had adopted Blackboard 5 as a comprehensive and flexible elearning software platform that delivers a course management system, and, with level three, provides a customizable institution-wide portal and online communities. This Blackboard software is currently integrated with the University's Registrar's database, thus providing a website for each course, such as this one, in the database. All of the students were aware of the fact that the computer will be applied in this course before they signed up for it. The majority of students indicated that the application of the internet-based Blackboard gave them very convenient flexibility to do their writings and review them whenever they please. They found that attending the class and using 'Blackboard' complement each other. Some students emphasized that all the necessary course materials were accessible through the course web page; so, they had a chance to access them limitlessly. They indicated that this is more or less a 24-hour accessible course no matter when or where the student might be.

Another valuable component of the asynchronous learning system of this course was the email. It actually made the horizontal (students among themselves) and vertical (students and instructor) communication very easy all through the course including weekends. The instructor was cooperative; his role was basically (1) director (2) facilitator (3) brainstormer, and (4) manager of the course. Anything related to the course was posted on the course web page, where 'announcements', 'course information', staff information', course documents', discussion board', 'external links' and 'user tools' were posted. All what a student needed was a few clicks away.

Despite the fact that this looks like a purely computer dependent environment, the students were required to consult: (1) The American Heritage Dictionary, or a "good" college dictionary. (2) A Writer's Reference. (4th edition) by Hacker, Diana. They were also required to read a required novel called *Parable of the Sower*, by Octavia E. Butler. Students were required to benefit from the novel, and connect the chapters they read out of the novel with their own real life experiences in their writings. Thus, not a single draft in any of the papers is void of at least one or two reflections on the novel. So, in this course reading and writing were going hand in hand. This strategy is in line with the common belief that a good writer is most probably and primarily a good reader. Students' readings were by no means restricted to this novel. They were encouraged by the instructor to read extensively, to be inspired by what they read, and to apply the knowledge they get from their own readings. This might ultimately enhance their own writing styles. Whenever students in this course wrote about something they read before, their writing was usually better because the ideas were already there. All they needed was to finely tune their language and style.

Participation in any course of study is a constant source of encouragement and enthusiasm for any instructor. Since this course combines both 'online' and face-to-face strategies, active participation on the part of students was encouraged and motivated by the instructor. The instructor encouraged students to participate in class on the individual and group level discussions. Actually, he motivated them to do so by generating ideas for group discussions, and taking part in these discussions. In fact, participation in this class was unavoidable, simply because every student had to review, edit, discuss, respond to, write, or comment on something during the class. The class was more like a workshop, where everybody had no choice but to do his/her share.

Grading System:

Students in this course were not graded on their early drafts simply because the instructor believed that doing so would be grading them based on the knowledge they brought to class rather than on what they learned during the class. At the end of the course, students handed over an accumulation of what they had written during the course in a portfolio. Students' portfolios were, then, graded. When a certain portfolio passed the portfolio review, the following criteria were used to evaluate students' portfolios:

 A grade of (A) was reserved for portfolios whose papers were excellent in thought, organization, and style. The (A) portfolio had papers that used a sound organizational strategy, with clearly developed paragraphs proceeding from a unified thesis. The ideas themselves were engaging and showed illuminating

insights into the subject. Assertions were supported by evidence. There were very few distracting errors in style, diction, or mechanics.

- A grade of (B) was for papers that were quite good, but weaker than A papers in some areas. (B) papers might have good ideas that were marred by some problems of organization and/or style. (B) papers might be well organized and well written but offer fewer or less significant insights than (A) papers.
- 3. A grade of (**C**) was generally given to a paper that would be called 'clearly acceptable, but not exceptional.' A (C) portfolio will contain papers that showed a competent understanding of the assigned topic, but whose insights did not go beyond the obvious points that most papers make. A (C) could also be assigned to an inconsistent portfolio that has papers that showed some excellent insights but that failed to tie ideas into unified wholes.

A student would earn a grade of (C), which is a passing grade for the course, by:

- Handing in all of his/her assignments complete and on time. Assignments were always due at the beginning of the assigned class period; only in rare circumstances students were allowed to make up work.
- Making it clear that the student has taken revision seriously in his/her portfolio.
- Writing three assigned papers (and a portfolio cover letter) that meet the criteria for a grade of (C) listed above. Though the student's grade would be on the entire portfolio, a portfolio that contained even one failing essay would receive a failing grade. Nobody could pass the class unless his/her portfolio passed portfolio review.

- Making sure that all of the student's assignments showed effort and thinking.
- Producing a portfolio that was well organized.
- Being a regular attendant. Students were permitted only 3 absences. Only in rare circumstances would absences be considered 'excused'.
- Completing assigned reading and discussing related material, which would be reflected by the student participating actively in classroom discussions and activities (including participation on the Blackboard Discussion Boards).
- Completing all daily assignments in the journal (at least a journal a week).

A student would earn a grade of (B) for the course by:

- Meeting the requirements for a (C) grade.
- Writing three assigned papers (and a portfolio cover letter) that met the criteria for a
 (B) grade listed above.

A student would earn a grade of (A) for the course by:

- Meeting the requirements for a (C).
- Writing three assigned papers (and a portfolio cover letter) that meet the criteria for an (A) grade listed above.

External Links:

Students were expected to refer to and carefully read extra material through 'External Links' or the 'Web' to be stimulated by other peoples' writings that can be good examples and models to imitate. Before writing a paper, it was recommended that students should read chapters of the novel as well as some essays and articles through the External Links. The instructor's recommendation was "read, read and read; read as much as you can." Although most of the students remarked that there were definite advantages to have those External Links, however they do not use them as much. Students reported that they generally read some article or essay every now and then, but some of them believe that was time consuming. Student number 3 commented that:

"... It would be much easier to ask someone in the Writing Lab or the tutor about something rather than reading what is on the External Links. However, we sometimes have no other choice"

Other students, on the other hand, believe that the material on External Links is very significant and helpful. Actually, External Links do not only enrich a subject through additional supporting or related information, but also provide the means for fast and easy navigation between different sources and types of information. External Links are the windows of the course through which students can view the rest of the world. Thus, in order to further their writing abilities, students were required to develop sound reading habits. Without extensive readings, students' writing skills would remain isolated and impoverished. Extensive readings would enrich students' writing skills; the students' ideas would intermingle with other peoples' ideas. This enrichment could broaden the horizons of students, acute, and finely tune their writing skills and capabilities.

One strategy of enhancing students' writing is by letting them do writing projects in which they respond in some way to other texts: chapters, articles, fiction, films, advertisements, songs, art, etc. College-level students are fairly used to using class discussion, free writing, written journals, or on-line discussion as invention tools to help them generate and shape their reactions to these texts. Thus, playing with written or oral

language can help students think about, and make connections between and among, the texts they were reading. It can stimulate intellectual connections and insights that might not happen if students were asked to think only in words. In this course, all students' papers were types of responses to chapters discussed earlier on in the class.

Cooperative Learning:

Computer-assisted writing provides a good opportunity for collaborative and/or cooperative learning. Cooperative learning was virtually applied in this course. Students used to exchange screens to edit each other's writing. They used to peer review, build on, comment on, suggest and add threads of thought to each other's pieces of writing. With the help of the instructor, the 'Discussion Board' was a spirited forum where students used to share and exchange ideas and thoughts about their papers and writing strategies. According to (Johnson & Johnson, 2001), cooperative leaning is arguably the most researched instructional method in education. Cooperative leaning can be defined as students working together in small groups. A group of students could be doing their own work while talking to each other, but there is no structure, or positive interdependence (Ibid, 2001). When implemented correctly, students benefit from cooperative learning by achieving high academic success, as well as, developing positive and supportive relationships that boost self esteem (Ibid, 1999). Slavin (1996) identified four theoretical perspectives on cooperative learning and achievement: motivational, social cohesion, developmental, and cognitive elaboration. Much research has shown that students who received help from a peer learned more than students worked alone, and that those who tutored learned more than either group.

The Process Approach:

The 1970s have witnessed a big shift in writing approaches. The process approach rather than the end-product approach of writing became the dominant writing format. The 'Process Approach' attributed to student-centered and multi-dimensional learning environment. A variety of cooperative learning activities facilitate the writing process. All these activities such as brainstorming, revision and editing were applied in this course. Students naturally communicated with each other without any sense of anxiety; they actually shared their composing potentials with the rest of the class. Major advantages of peer editing were the good chances that were given to students to read, comment on, and benefit from the multiple sources of new information and knowledge that other students have. This will ultimately help students to achieve and sharpen their own higher-level thinking. They begin to see that writing is a learning process– a notion that coincides neatly with the tenets of the constructivist theory of education.

Constructivism as viewed by this study sees that:

- (1) Learners construct their own understanding.
- (2) Learning is enhanced when learners generate their own meanings.
- (3) Learners should be encouraged to be self-regulated and manage their own cognitive resources.
- (4) New learning depends on current understanding.
- (5) Social interaction takes place through group work.
- (6) Authentic tasks promote meaningful learning.
(7) Assessment is an ongoing process and embedded within the activities of the lesson. It is integrated in group work, class discussion, and class products or performances.

It is the researcher's belief that psychologically, cooperative learning triggers creativity and gives learners a chance to build on each other's ideas, concepts and ways of thinking. Once these ideas and concepts are understood and internalized, they become integral parts of the students' permanent construct of knowledge, which is at the heart of the constructivist theory of learning.

All students, of course, had an Internet access from home. Despite this fact, many of the students prefer to use the University College Labs, particularly the Writing Lab, where there is almost always a writing tutor working in the lab as a consultant to assist students incase help is sought. The atmosphere of the writing lab was friendly, inviting and comfortable. Students who recurrently use the Writing Lab emphasized that it was efficient and helpful. Student number (1) once said:

"It is true that a computer can help you with everything that the tutor can help you with, but still receiving face-to-face help is more meaningful".

Students mentioned that the multiple drafts they wrote for each paper, and the feedback they got from the instructor had contributed to their learning.

In short, almost all of the students' responses were positive to the computerassisted instructional system. Everybody was comfortable communicating class-related material online. They greatly appreciated the flexible dimension of this learning system.

The Nature of the Interaction Process in this Class

Computer Responsibilities for the English 099 course:

Course Web Page:

For this course, it was mandatory for every student to have an email account accessible in the College Computer Lab. Once students' email accounts were recorded in 'Blackboard', there was an email message waiting for each student everyday in class. The time/date stamped reply to that message would serve as proof of the student's attendance. Besides email, things related to the course such as instructions for assignments, adjustments to the schedule, due dates, and any other pertinent information were posted on the course web page on one of the following sites on Blackboard: 'announcements', 'course information', 'course documents', or 'discussion board'. These were the primary means of communication between the instructor and students outside of class. It was the students' responsibility to check these sites to receive any instruction.

Blackboard:

The University College has adopted Blackboard (5) as a comprehensive and flexible E-Learning software platform that delivers a course management system, and with Level 'Three', it provides a customizable institution-wide portal and online communities. Currently, the Blackboard software is integrated with the University's registrar's database, thus providing a website for each course in the database as illustrated below: COURSES > 02W 17ENGL 099014 > CONTROL PANEL





Blackboard provides a single, easy to remember web site for course contents. It is accessible from any computer with Internet access. Items that were included on the Blackboard website for this course were daily instructions, the class discussion board, handouts, and other links to this website. Students' Blackboard accounts were created, and students were enrolled in the web site for this course during the first class meeting. Students also had the following computer responsibilities for this class:

- 1. Checking Blackboard and email at the beginning of each class in order to record attendance, check for new assignments, and receive important messages.
- 2. Making and keeping a back-up copy of all assignments the student submitted.
- 3. In case a student did not have a computer at home that is compatible to those in the lab (PC with Windows 95 or later – not Macintosh), then the student was expected to do much of his/her out-of-class writing in the college computer labs in order for his/her papers to be in the right format.
- 4. Students were expected to use the computers responsibly, which meant not surfing the Net, working on a paper, playing games, or reading email while the instructor was lecturing, conducting discussions, or while doing other class activities that did not involve computer use.

Described below are the three types of interaction that took place in this course. They signify the main frame to construct writing skills through the different channels of interaction in this computer-assisted course; these are:

Student – Content Interaction:

In computer assisted courses, instructional interactions include "interactions that take place between learners and the content they are trying to master" (Ozen, 2000, p. 86). Students, then, are expected to construct their own knowledge from the materials provided on the course web page. Except for the optional readings accessed through External Links, the material provided for this writing course was their actual acts of writing. The time they spent on thoughtful focused and genuine writing was a real engagement in learning. That is because the best learning mood takes place when students participate actively and engage themselves with the actual study material. So, in this course, the student-content interaction was basically the journals, peer reviews, summaries, drafts and papers students wrote in and out of the computer lab. The following chart shows that there was a constant student-content interaction all through the course. It shows how many times each student did an act of writing:

Student number	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Acts of writing	29	21	42	20	22	21	34	35	13	23	18

Student – Instructor Interaction:

Unlike many web-based courses, this course allowed for face-to-face interaction throughout the academic quarter between the students and the instructor apart from electronic communications. The instructor provided help both face-to-face and online through the 'discussion board' and email. He set up his office hours from the first meeting with the students; moreover, he physically conducted all the classes of the course. All students reported that the instructor was helpful, accessible, and prompt in responding to their enquiries. His messages on the 'discussion board' usually included reminders that encouraged the students to see or ask him if they have any questions. The students' sense of security, their self-confidence, and their sense of being motivated have contributed in helping them doing well in this course.

Interaction through the 'Discussion Board':

During this course, constant interaction took place through the 'discussion board' between the students and the content material, students and the instructor, and among the students themselves. The 'discussion board' activities occurred as a result of in-class and out-of-class writing assignments. Appendix (L) is a portrayal of the 'discussion board'. It holds the total of (179) messages under (7) categories; these messages were communicated back and forth on that platform alone. Under each category, the instructor directed a question or a request to the students to do something related to the course. All of these messages were inherently related to the course, i.e. nothing was social or personal; each and every message was nothing but a short act of writing and an addition of a new thread to the content material. If we divide them evenly over the students, the average will be (17.2) messages per student. Appendix (M) shows the overall statistics of access to the course web site all through the winter quarter of 2002.

Accessing the Course Website:

Table (1) below illustrates that there was no significant correlation between the number of visits/accesses to the course web page and the number of acts of writing (journals, or initial drafts) on the part of the students, and the students' grades in this course. Student number (9) who got an (A) in the course visited the course page 432 times (96 above the average), and her total acts of writing was the lowest in the class; it

was just (13) times (12 below the average). However, student number (5 an ESL student)), who failed the course, visited the course page 669 times (332 above the average} and the total number of his acts of writing was (22) times (4 below the average). Student number (3) was a good example of those who wrote the most frequently; she wrote (42) times, however, her grade was a (B-). Two students out the three who scored the highest grades wrote the fewest number of acts of writing. These are numbers (9) and (11); they got (A and B) respectively. Nothing significant was noticeable about student number (6), who was also an ESL student. He visited the course page (290) times, wrote just (18) times, and got a grade of (C), which is rated as 'Fair'.

 Table (1)

 Students' final grades, total number of accesses, and total number of acts of writing as illustrated in the following table:

Student Number	Grade	Total Accesses	Acts of writing*
1.	C+	273	29
2.	C-	280	21
3.	B-	504	42
4.	С	100	20
5. ESL	IP (Fail)	669	22
6. ESL	С	290	21
7.	C+	556	34
8.	В	212	35
9.	Α	432	13
10.	В-	307	23
11.	В	90	18
		Grand Total (3713)	Grand Total (278)

* Each time a student wrote related to the papers 1, 2, 3 and included in the portfolio.

This may suggest that over visiting the web page of the course is an indication of insufficiency and meagerness on the part of the student as is the case with student number (5). Other students visited the course web page on as-needed basis.

Student – Student Interaction:

Students were strongly encouraged by the instructor to interact among themselves in the form of study groups, idea instigators, brainstormers, editors, reviewers or proofreaders. Students who participated in such interactions indicated that they received tremendous benefits from such informal and cooperative type of learning. Although this interaction might seem voluntary, however, not a single student could evade active participation. If a student did so, s/he would feel abandoned or isolated, or left behind. Each student was expected to add a new thread, which would in turn encourage a cycle of threads that collectively would provide constant and constructive feedback. Students' comments on the surveys and the informal interviews reflected their belief that they learned a great deal from interacting with other students. As a result, they collaboratively learned invaluable skills of writing that ultimately showed a positive difference in their writing capabilities. It is true that learning is an individual enterprise, but the quality support that a learner gets informally in a cooperative learning environment can be improving, diverse, fruitful and productive. Cooperative learning environment familiarizes the learner with other learners' writing styles. They learn how to develop a model of their own skills and knowledge. Many educators consider collaborative learning a goal that is worth pursuit; they consider it important in itself and in terms of increasing the learners' efficiency in problem solving and learning. It can help students monitor their own writing style and capabilities; it can also reduce anxiety, possible frustration and lack of confidence.

Students' Motivation and Attitude Towards Computer:

Motivation is a key and crucial factor in learning. Students are generally oriented either intrinsically (internally) or extrinsically (externally) towards learning. Behaviorists believe that extrinsic motivation comes from the outside world of the learner; intrinsic motivation, however, generates from the inside world of the learner (see Duffelmeyer, 2000). This division of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation applied to the students in this study. Those aiming at completing this course as part of their program requirements are examples of extrinsic motivation. Those aiming at gaining knowledge and experience, however, are examples of intrinsic motivation.

This study has found that students' motivation steered and guided their involvement in this course. They all have had instrumental goals behind taking this course. The qualitative and quantitative data (or the surveys & questionnaires) indicated that the students' motive for this course was basically extrinsic. Students took this course for one, or both of the following reasons:

1. Convenient in the sense that knowledge, i.e. the 'equipment' needed by writers such as dictionaries and other resources are at their fingertips.

2. Prerequisite/Required course for higher courses in the English Department. Students' grades in this course were relatively low (B- and below). This indicated that they exerted inadequate or less effort into learning than was required from them to benefit from the knowledge available at their fingertips.

As far as writing is concerned, educators believe that intrinsic motivation increases creativity. It generates from a need to acquire, sharpen, further and gain more writing skills and knowledge on the part of the students. This type of motivation implies

the readiness of students to exert more effort to learn, process information and strive to better self. Extrinsic motivation, however, holds back creativity. Learners who are more intrinsically motivated are more likely to demonstrate initiative, independence, and enjoyment in the computer assisted instruction than their extrinsically motivated counterparts (Ormrod, 1995). Perelman (1992) argued that every new educational technology promises to be intrinsically motivating including the World Wide Web – a case that might not as yet completely applied to the students in this study.

Appendix (D) consists of 27 questions that were designed on a five-point Likert scale, where (1) = Strongly Agree (2) = Agree (3) = Disagree (4) = Strongly Disagree (5) = No Opinion. They were divided into the following four categories that were intended to find out whether this CAW course was: **{1}** Appropriate and Effective: questions # 1, 2, 10, 11, 12, 17, 18, 19, 21, 22, 24 & 25 **{2}** Helpful: questions # 3, 4, 5, 6, 9, 13, 14, 15, 20 & 26 {3} Comfortable: questions # 7, 16, 23 {4} Ineffective: questions # 8, 25 & 27. Results showed that: (1) 61.74% of the participants 'Strongly Agree' that the pedagogical aspects of this computer-aided writing course were effective, helpful, comfortable and powerful; (2) 31.06% 'Agree' so too; (3) 5.68% Disagree with the above; (4) 01.51% Strongly Disagree with the above, and (5) 0% gave No Opinion. Tables (2 & 3) below are illustrative. Items number 8, 25 & 27 are not included in Table (2) because they have reversed value; they are structured to check if the application of computers is 'Ineffective'. They are illustrated in Table (3) below:

Items		11 0, 25 a 2		(Include	a
Items				y ë	
	Strongly Agree) Agree) Disagree) Strongly Disagre) No opinion
	[]	(2	(3)	(4)	(2)
1. The Blackboard format is appropriate and effective for this course.	7	3	1	0	0
2. The computer enables me to overcome major mechanical problems in writing, such as punctuation marks, spelling, documentation and capitalization.	7	4	0	0	0
3. The computer helps me in diction (the choice of words).	7	3	1	0	0
4. The computer helps me in solving a lot of grammatical and syntactic (sentence structure) problems.	6	3	2	0	0
5. The application of computers facilitates the process of reading related material and imitating it in my own writing.	8	2	1	0	0
6. The application of computers makes writing an easier task for me, so I write spontaneously and more frequently.	6	4	1	0	0
7. I was always comfortable with the technology used in this class.	7	3	1	0	0
9. Computer-assisted instruction allows me to perform to the best of my academic ability.	6	3	1	1	0
 The sequence of activities was meaningful; it maximized my involvement as a beginning writer. 	7	3	1	0	0
11. The activities promoted spontaneity in me as a beginning writer.	6	3	1	1	0
12. This computer-assisted course complements and compliments the way I like to write.	8	2	1	0	0
13. This course encouraged me to exercise my writing creativity.	7	4	0	0	0
14. The course material encouraged me to interact with the Web.	6	5	0	0	0
15. This computer-assisted course stimulated me to read extra material related to writing.	6	3	1	1	0
16. I was comfortable in asking for clarification from the instructor and/or other students using e-mail and/or 'Discussion Board' when I need help.	7	4	0	0	0
17. I made comments on other students' assignments using the 'Discussion Board'.	6	5	0	0	0
18. I got feedback from the instructor and/or other students through e-mail and/or the 'Discussion Board'	6	5	0	0	0
19. The Web interaction has increased my writing capabilities.	6	3	1	1	0
20. When something in this course was not known to me, it was easy to get clarification using the Web resources.	6	3	2	0	0
21. I learned from the 'discussion board' comments made by the other students on my assignments.	8	3	0	0	0
22. Participating in writing comments on others students' efforts improves my own writing canabilities	8	3	0	0	0
23 Since this course is Internet based. I feel more comfortable asking awkward questions	-	4	0	0	0
24. This course ancourse of metric control the same of a regular electrony	/	4	0	0	0
24. This course encouraged me to seek resources beyond the scope of a regular classfoom.	/	4	0	0	0
20. Peet reviews in this course neiped to improve my writing skills.	8	3	0	0	0
Total	163	82	15	4	0
Percentage	61.74	31.06	5.68	1.51	0 %

Table (2)Frequency table of the Likert scale survey for selected items. Items # 8, 25 & 27 are not included

			,	/	
Items	(1) Strongly Agree	(2) Agree	(3) Disagree	(4) Strongly Disagree	(6) No opinion
8. This course does not have positive impact on my learning.	0	0	3	7	1
25. Doing assignments for this class were more difficult than doing assignments for a traditional writing class.	0	1	3	7	0
27. Because this is an Internet-based course, I waste more time than I would in a traditional writing class.	0	0	3	7	1
Total	0	1	9	21	2
Percentage	0 %	3.03 %	27.27 %	63.63 %	6.06 %

Table (3)Frequency table of the above survey for selected items (reversed-value items # 8, 25 & 27)

Students were convinced that utilizing the Internet-based blackboard platform is a powerful and effective language teaching and learning tool. The students of this English 099 course regarded the versatile interactivity at all levels as a key to the success of the course. Student # 7 once remarked that:

"... if you miss the class discussions you will not miss whatever posted on the discussion board, class announcements or course documents on Blackboard".

Actually, the course has also the merits of the traditional classroom, which the researcher does not think will eventually come to an extinct. However, the researcher believes that most students in this class were not adequately prepared yet to make full use of the numerous functions of this exciting educational technology. Thus, we need to know that technology training for ourselves, and our students should be an ongoing and necessary process.

It is noticeable that this student has accepted society's messages about computer technology and saw it as having positively and permanently marked her life. Despite the concerns that some people might have about this technology, she believed that these are inevitably part of the overall positive impact of having technology in our lives. In this study, no single participant shows a half-heart or tentative acceptance of the efficiency and productivity of the application of computers in writing. Students have had confidence that this technology was helpful, not only as it existed now, but also in the future. The following attitude stated below by student # 9 was analogous to the dominant, position in which students in general experience and interpret technology in a manner primarily consistent with the cultural messages about it:

"I enjoy computers. . . I have been in love with anything electronic. Computers have basically changed my life. I will always fully embrace any technological breakthrough."

Appendix (E), which is an evaluation questionnaire, consists of two parts: (part (A) = 8 questions & part (B) = 2 questions). The eight questions in Part (A) were designed on **'YES'**, **'No'** or **'No Difference'** basis. They were divided into the following four categories that were intended to find out whether applying the computer in this course was: (1) Helpful and enjoyable: questions # 1, 2, 3, 4 & 8. (2) Effective: questions # 5 & 7. (3) Ineffective: question # 6.

As Table (4) below illustrates, 89.61% of the answers agree that the course was helpful, enjoyable and effective; 0% of the answers were "No", and 10.38% report "No Difference". All students (100%) responded by "No" to item number (6), which was not included in Table (4) because it has a 'reversed value'.

Item	Yes	No	No Difference
1. I enjoyed using computer to send and receive papers from my instructor.	9	0	2
2. I enjoyed working with my classmates using computers.	9	0	2
3. I felt I the comments my instructor and classmates sent me on computer were helpful.	8	0	3
4. I think using computers helped my writing.	11	0	0
5. I would like to take another course in writing using computer.	10	0	1
7. By the end of the course, I felt I understood how to use computers for writing purposes.	11	0	0
8. I enjoy sending papers electronically rather than handing in hard copies of them.	11	0	0
TOTAL	69	0	8
Percentage	89.61%	0%	10.38%

Table (4)Evaluation questionnaire

Actually, there is a clear trend in statistics in tables 2, 3 & 4 above. They show pretty much similar conclusions although the items enquired are different. They are in line with the dominant position that students in this study have enjoyed and benefited from positive computer experiences that were sufficient to develop and form their positive attitudes. Students believed that if they had the opposite attitude, they would pay the price for their unfortunately out-of-the norm attitude by not getting a good job in the future, and by being generally left behind. Their tendency towards abiding by the commonly held belief that the need for computers is inseparable from quality education is a strong indication that these students are indeed receiving and reproducing society's enthusiastic messages about this helpful technology in our modern world. Student # 3 indicated that, "Computers have had a positive influence on our lives these days. They will continue to play a big role in my life personally and almost everyone else's life." Such comments on the part of students described computers as making endless

information about the world available at our fingertips, or at the click of a mouse, making the world smaller, and providing benefits that are far beyond description. Student # 10, for instance, stated that,

"Everyone should just have a computer, so they can find out how much they will like it". According to students' opinions, computer access and skills are equated with modern age success. To them, being computer literate is a mark of strong character, hard work, sophistication, and perseverance.

Strengths and Weaknesses of the Course:

Except for few cases, the students' personal experiences with this developmental writing course indicated that the following areas of strength and weakness are as follows:

Strengths:

- Convenient/Flexible communication can be done on student's own time.
- Resources are available 24 hours.
- Constantly revised hard copies available to review away from the computer.
- External links connect you to related and helpful resources.
- The instructor is accessible anytime even weekends.
- Helps students' personal growth, independence and sense of responsibility.
- Gives chance for individual talents to outreach knowledge.
- Immediate feedback from the instructor or classmates.

- A good platform for students who benefit from cooperative learning.
- Easier to record, modify, re-modify, and build on earlier drafts.
- Handy and beneficial Microsoft Word features (spell and grammar check, etc.).
- Easier to manipulate the texts.
- Internet put immense amounts of knowledge under students' disposal, so they are a few clicks away from these immense amounts of knowledge.
- Students have a dual benefit of face-to-face and CA education.
- Students feel themselves on task and at the far end of the pool (of learning) from day one of the course.
- The course can take the student as far as s/he can go.
- Students have had a good extracurricular experience technology-wise.
- Easier to write more in number and bigger in size texts.
- Easier to avoid mechanical errors such as spelling mistakes and fragments.
- Easier to make use of helpful software, and benefit from online communities of writers.

Weaknesses: the reported areas of weakness were few due to the fact that the course was a combination of online and lecture type. They could be summarized as follows:

- 1. Language barrier on the part of one of the ESL students.
- 2. The adjustment to the system took some students some extra time.

Writing Strategies Applied in this Course

In this course, the 'discussion board' was a good platform for brainstorming. Students as well as the instructor posted and exchanged ideas using the 'discussion board'. These exchanged ideas were a good resource for generating and elaborating on new ideas. The application of computers in this course enabled students to review their 'old documents', i.e. their earlier drafts. These 'old documents' were a good source for generating new ideas; they also helped as organizational and format templates for new documents. The researcher noticed that students' papers were frequently built on previous papers. Students were encouraged to make a habit of keeping old documents on their computers, to consult them whenever they start working on a related topic. Browsing the web helped learners see how other writers had treated a certain topic. They also alerted learners to recent developments on that topic. Sometimes, exchanging electronic mail helped bring students' ideas together. They asked questions like "What do you think?" to gain a different perspective on a topic and to elicit new ideas about it. Reading the messages posted on the 'Discussion Board" served purposes similar to browsing old documents or browsing the web. Students were constantly encouraged to respond to the messages they came across if these messages piqued arose their interest. Students in this class wrote the minimum of one journal per week. These journals were basically reflections on conversations, and explorations of new ideas for their new papers. Some students used to jot down and save ideas or a running list of notes about their new papers as they come to their minds. Besides the recommended web site <www.powa.org> provided through 'External Links', students were encouraged to create lists of useful web sites such as 'Online Writing Center Links', Colorado State University, WAC

Clearinghouse Home Page', and 'The Alliance for Computer and Writing'. These addresses are called URLs (Uniform Resource Locators); they could be referred to as bookmarks (Navigators) and favorites. These bookmarks and favorites offer significant advantages as data bases when conducting searches for information.

As illustrated in chapter (5) below, writing usually starts with **'planning'** where the writer, whether s/he is experienced or inexperienced, plans his/her topic. Planning can be 'global' (focuses on larger issues of audience, purpose, organization, and style), or local (focuses on issues such as word choice, sentence structure, and appropriate evidence for a particular point (Palmoquist & Zimmerman, 1999). Students in this course noticeably did more local planning than global planning. Computers were helpful in planning when students used multiple windows to jot down notes from different resources.

The second step was mostly **'drafting'**, where students tried to put full-fledged thoughts and ideas into full-fledged sentences and paragraphs. So, drafting is at the center of writing; it tells the writer what s/he knows and does not know about the topic at hand. Compared to pencil/pen and paper, computers are proven to be faster, easier, more practical and more accessible. Students in this course found the chance for them to write, erase, cut, paste, modify, add, cut again, rewrite, and save as many files and as may drafts as they want. All the word processing facilities were at their disposal. They were able to reuse or 'recycle' old documents or texts. Before the application of computers in writing, the researcher used to draft a page or two, and after one or two revisions, arrows could be seen flying everywhere across the pages. Computers made it a lot easier for students in this course to use different strategies such as different colors, outlines, divided screens,

several windows, or fonts to distinguish things. They also moved easily from one passage to another. In drafting, computers were excellent arenas for collaborative activities. The instructor used to let students collaborate in a 'round-robin' fashion, with every student reviewing and revising chunks of writing drafted by other students. Students used to write a page or so on the screen, then the instructor asked them to exchange seats and edit each other's writing. In other occasions, students were asked to publish their pieces of writing on the 'discussion board' for editing and reviewal by other students. In the process, students could pass their drafts back and forth until they were satisfied with them. The same applied to files, where they could be exchanged on floppy diskettes or via computer network. Word processing programs support comparing, tracking, and annotating documents. The researcher concluded that the peer review activity let the students recognize that other students could have similar difficulties in composing their ideas. Peer review also helped them to discover whether they themselves were making their points effectively.

The third step was **'organizing'** where students organize their initial writing efforts. Computers allowed students in this course to organize and reorganize documents by making it easy for them to move text from one part of a document to another, and by allowing students to view documents in different ways. With the help and guidance of the instructor, students were encouraged to role-play the audience of their own papers and organize them accordingly. They were encouraged to find answers to questions that the audience might ask. So, the same as review and revision, organizing was a constant process.

While reviewing and revising focus on large issues such as those that concern the writer's overall goals of a document and its various sections, editing focuses on issues such as the clarity and accuracy at the passage level. As is the case with review and revision, computers were good tools for students in this course to edit their papers. These tools were mainly useful for checking spelling, grammar, and style; editing for consistency, variety, and avoiding errors as illustrated below.

Editing Spelling:

Unlike pencil/pen and paper writing, which requires a dictionary next to you all the time to check your spelling mistakes, computers do the job for you. "Spelling checkers are particularly valuable because they allow you to focus on your ideas, your audience, and your purpose as you write – rather than on lower level concerns with spelling" (Palmoquist & Zimmerman 1999, p. 44). Though they are not without problems and limitations (abridged dictionaries), especially with homonyms (words that sound alike but are spelled differently), they radically reduce spelling mistakes. The word processing package that was used in the computer lab could flag possible misspelled words as the students were writing. Some students preferred to do spelling corrections while they were working; others however, preferred to do corrections after they were done from writing. Appendix (N) can be illustrative.

Editing for Grammar and Style:

Word processing software provides a quick way to review a draft for basic grammar, mechanical, and style problems. These features work pretty much the same as

spelling checkers. The same as spelling checkers, they have both strengths and weaknesses. More often than not, computers skip some grammar and style problems. That is basically because of the following: (1) there are so many exceptions to the rules, (2) grammar and style checkers cannot identify all the permutations of language constructions that might arise in any one context, (3) acceptable usage varies widely among the vast areas of specialties, (4) different specialists and people of interest interpret the rules differently, and (5) English develops over time (see Palmoquist & Zimmerman 1999). Students in this course used to review their grammar and style when they saw their texts flagged. They clicked the right button, reviewed the suggested change, clicked 'change' to accept, or 'ignore' to skip the proposed change. Whenever the writers are unsure, recent software gives the writer a chance to click on the checker's 'help', 'explain', or 'rules' button, and it displays the rule, and explanation, or the required help. Some of the students, however, waited until they were done; scrolled up to the top of the document, saved the document first, and started the grammar and style checker by clicking on an icon on the button bar or by using the menu. If by any chance the spelling and grammar and style checking tools skip certain errors, or if they wrongly flagged something, that would be due to the inability of current versions of these tools to analyze all the complexities of spelling, grammar, and style.

The application of computers also gave the students in this course a chance to: overcome lexical problems, speed up their writing, sort out their lists and references, and correct themselves. Students made an excellent use of thesaurus to improve their diction. They frequently used synonyms to add consistency, variety and flavor to their style. Students were able to speed up their writing. They abbreviated long phrases and replaced

them later. For example the novel they read, *Parable of the Sower*, could be abbreviated as **POS** all through the paper; when the student was done, s/he could click on 'Edit', click on replace, enter 'PSO' in the 'find what box', enter '*parable of the sower*' in the 'replace with box', and so on so for. Furthermore, students were able to alphabetically sort out random lists and references as illustrated in Appendix (N). With the pen/pencil and paper, if the writer happened to mistakenly repeat the same mistake dozens of times, s/he had to go over each and every instance to correct it. Students were able to correct themselves within seconds throughout the application of the 'Find' and 'Replace' commands.

In writing courses in general, students are frequently advised to avoid grammatical structures such as the passive voice as much as possible. Passive constructions usually concentrate on the action itself not on the agent of the action. This imperfection by itself decreases clarity in the communicated message. This, by no means, suggests that students cannot use the passive, but it suggests that students should be cautious about using it. Word processing helped our subjects in that matter; the majority of passive voice constructions were flagged. By being aware of some basic rules of grammar, particularly the two ESL subjects in the study, students could have avoided this unfavorable problem in style.

In addition to the merits of computer mentioned earlier, the application of certain commands in the word processing package could help students at a more advanced stage to cut clutter in their writing. They could present and communicate their ideas more concisely and effectively. This could improve readability and make their documents more understandable for their intended readers.

Format, Layout and Document Design:

Students in this course made good use of the facilities that the computer provided in this respect. All their assignments followed the well-known assignment guidelines. So, all their assignments were 'Time New Roman' typed, double-spaced, 12-point typed, 1.5 inch margined on all sides, page numbered, with names, course title, and assignment subject in the upper left-hand corner of the first page. Appendix (N) shows how formatting cab be done. Other features such as viewing, inserting, cut and paste, font style and size, bulleting, line spacing, indentation, aligning, tables and figures to name a few were also accessible from the screen. The application of all or some of these features on the part of our subjects increased the effectiveness and readability of their documents. The writing and computer skills that the students mastered in this class were really an excellent scaffold for higher and more advanced courses.

This course was just a first step and a basis for what is going to be next. The researcher expected students in advanced courses to be able to do so many more things such as gathering information online, locating online information sources, locating online library catalogs, locating databases such as ERIC (a database on educational issues that includes citations and abstracts of articles, conference presentations, manuscripts, and reports published since 1966), and MLA online, which (covers publications in literature, composition, linguistics, and foreign languages). Students are also expected to find many more writing supports online such as (www.powa.org) provided by 'External Links'. A lot of valuable materials including online books, online writing centers, dictionaries and style guides, glossaries, thesaurus, encyclopedias, grammar guides, style and citation guides, online texts about writing processes and genres, and online writing centers, to

name just a few, are available on the World Wide Web. A comprehensive list of these materials can be found at 'The Online Writing Center at Colorado State University' <<u>http://www.colostate.edu/Depts/WritingCenter</u>>,

<http://www.colostate.edu/Depts/WritingCenter/reference.html>, and at 'Purdue University's Online Writing Lab' < http://owl.english.purdue.edu>. A commonly used dictionary is the 'Merriam-Webster Dictionary'; it can be accessed at <<u>http://www.m-</u> w.com/dictionary>. A commonly used thesaurus on the Web is 'the Merriam-Webster Thesaurus' <<u>http://www.m-w.com/Thesaurus</u>>. Encyclopedias are also available on the Web; a commonly used one is 'the free Internet encyclopedia on <<u>http://clever.net/cam/encyclopedia.html</u>>. Students of writing could also consult grammar guides online. Some helpful sites are 'Online English Grammar' <http://www.edunet.com/english/grammar/index.html>, 'Grammar and Style Notes' <<u>http://www.english.upenn.edu/~ilynch/Grammar</u>>, and 'Grammar Hotline Dictionary <<u>http://www.tc.cc.va.us/vabeach/writcent/hotline.html</u>>. Students could also join online writing communities via electronic mail discussion lists, newsgroups, web sites, chat channels, and MOOs (Multi-User Dungeons - Object Oriented). These allow learners to discuss and share ideas, collaborate on projects, and request information about certain topics.

The Most Recurrent Categories of Mistakes in the Students' Papers:

Table (5) below was composed by the researcher to show a list of the most recurrent categories of mistakes in the students' papers and their drafts, as well as their frequency; categories are arranged in their order of frequency:

Type of Mistake	Frequency Paper (1)	Frequency Paper (2)	Frequency Paper (3)	Total
1 Crommor & Symton	225	174	242	742
1. Grammar & Syntax	325	1/4	243	/42
2. Punctuation mistakes	280	104	138	522
3. Missing word or wrong choice of word/phrase	189	114	128	431
4. Alternative word/expression; rephrasing or addition by the instructor	173	92	119	384
5. Awkward, vague or incomplete structure	148	106	98	352
6. Redundant word/sentence	121	67	78	266
7. Drawing attention due to lack of specifics and details	119	74	68	261
8. Spelling mistake	92	52	54	198
9. Transitions/connections between ideas	78	48	48	174
10. Clarifying question (input that requires more clarity)	66	25	39	130
11. Proofreading (Students should proofread their writing)	48	34	46	128
12. Fragment	49	29	38	116
13. Lack of clarifying example	46	29	26	101
14. Paragraphing (students should consider a new paragraph.	33	48	20	101
15. Lack of topic sentence	23	5	7	35

 Table (5)

 The frequency of the recurring mistakes in the students' papers and their drafts

It is true that the computer was a good helper in certain areas. However, a closer look at the students' papers showed that there were categories of mistakes where the computer was of no help. This means that the application computer was neutral with some of the categories, i.e. its presence or absence was indifferent. Table (6) below was compiled by the researcher to show both categories of mistakes based on the students' types of mistakes:

Computer software as a potential helper	Computer as a non-potential helper
Types of mistakes	<i>(limitations of Computer software)</i>
1. Grammar & Syntax.	 Alternative word/expression; rephrasing or addition by the instructor.
2. Punctuation mistake.	2. Drawing attention due to lack of specifics and details.
3. Missing word or wrong choice of word/phrase.	3. Clarifying question (input that requires more clarity).
4. Awkward, vague or incomplete structure(s).	4. Transitions/connections between ideas.
5. Redundant word/sentence.	5. Lack of clarifying example.
6. Spelling mistake.	6. Paragraphing (students should have considered new paragraph(s)).
7. Proofreading (students should proofread their writing).	7. Lack of topic sentence.
8. Fragment.	

 Table (6)

 Categories of mistakes where the computer software was helpful OR unhelpful

As mentioned earlier, each student in this study was given a chance to write each paper (3) times. This allows for measuring the students' progress throughout a total of 'Nine' drafts over a time span of an academic quarter. Table (7) below can be illustrative:

Draft #	Paper I	Paper II	Paper III
1.	Α	D	G
2.	В	Ε	Н
3.	С	F	Ι

Table (7)The three papers and their nine drafts (A-I)

In order to find statistical differences between groups of a certain study that uses the same population we need to use what is called Repeated Measure Analysis. Since there are three groups using *t*-test is ruled-out; however, multiple usage of *t*-test to find differences between the drafts is a possibility, but that possibility will inflate Error I meaning that we are increasing the false positive results. Moreover, the fact that we are using the same population in the comparison between any two chosen groups violates the use of t-test, as it is not acceptable to use the population mean in the same comparison. . Thus, using Repeated Measure Multivariate Analysis with **ANOVA** was the most helpful and accurate approach. In repeated measure multivariate statistics, the analysis is based on two things; the within group differences and the between group differences, and we are using the population variance instead of the population mean. That leads to the **F-test** which is based on the difference between 'the within' and 'the between' group differences. Furthermore, using **Hotelling's Trace (F-test)** produces the greatest group difference. Tables (8, 9 & 10) below reflect the students' population variances, for each

Paper (1, 2 & 3) and their multiple drafts (A - I).

Student	Draft (A)	Draft (B)	Draft (C)			
1	25	9	4			
2	68	21	8			
3	75	25	15			
4	109	38	17			
5	201	78	41			
6	76	30	11			
7	92	38	15			
8	48	19	6			
9	12	4	1			
10	46	13	7			
11	52	16	6			
Mean	73.09	26.45	11.91			

 Table (8) Paper (1) Drafts (A, B, C)

 Student population variance of paper # (I) & its multiple drafts (A-C)

F= 11.440, DF= 2, *p* = 0.003

As it is clearly apparent in table (8) above, the *P- value* was significant, reflecting an overall improvement in the students' writing abilities over time. The same scenario is also clear in Tables (9) and (10) below:

Student	Draft (D)	Draft (E)	Draft (F)
1	17	3	4
2	34	10	8
3	35	14	13
4	57	20	15
5	138	50	34
6	40	17	9
7	50	17	12
8	19	8	4
9	5	1	1
10	20	6	5
11	18	5	6
Mean	39.36	13.72	10.09

Table (9) Paper (2) Drafts (D, E & F) Student population variance of paper # (2) & its multiple drafts (D-F)

F= 8.049, DF= 2, *p* = 0.010

Student	Draft (G)	Draft (H)	Draft (I)
1	20	3	4
2	34	9	10
3	38	12	13
4	64	18	17
5	143	58	38
6	44	15	12
7	53	26	18
8	25	16	6
9	4	2	9
10	20	12	10
11	22	13	20
Mean	42.45	16.72	14.27

 Table (10) Paper (3) Drafts (G), (H), (I)

 Student population variance of paper # (3) & its multiple drafts (G-I)

F= 8.375, DF= 2, *p* = 0.009

Examining students' writing over time indicates clearly a significant decrease in the number of errors. Figures (1, 2 & 3) below are pictorial images of the estimated marginal means; they trace the students' writing over time. They show a steady and constant drop of the number of errors as shown in the three drafts of the three papers, **where:**

D = draft, and. the figures on the Vertical Axis represent the number of mistakes committed by students.





Figure (1)



Figure (2)



Figure (3)

As shown above in the 'pictorial trace of students' writing over time', the slopes of the repeated measure in the three papers show that there was a constant and steady improvement in the students' drafts and papers alike.

A good question could be: was that improvement due to the application of the computer or not? As I said earlier, there were areas where the computer was no more than a neutral device; it barely lent any help. There were areas, however, where it could draw the attention of the writer to a potential error. Moreover, computers could connect and provide writers with very rich and vast sources of help and guidance. They were

facilitators to the extent that they changed the process of writing from a burden to a joy and fun on the part of the students. Practically, their usage was in the heart of constructivism, where learners could constantly build on, and add to their previous technical and pedagogical knowledge.

Thus, the computer as a device had never been a magical instrument that could switch people from poor writers to good writers over night. Computers are no more than tools that put the necessary and crucial equipment that instigate writers ready at their disposal. Moreover, the software that is available so far is an excellent tool that plays the role of the editor. Actually, the swift turn of people all over the world to the application of computers is an indicator that nobody gives a second thought about the efficiency of computers at almost all levels. This by no means can be available or accessible to people, who still use pencil/pen and paper in this or that corner of the world.

Example 7 Summary, Conclusions, Discussion, Implications and Recommendations

Summary & Conclusions:

In this chapter, I will discuss how the Internet-based blackboard platform provides learning opportunities for English 099 writing students, and what this means for instructors of this or similar courses.

Ancient Sumerians started record keeping on clay tablets five thousand years ago. Ever since, writers searched for more convenient, efficient and enduring ways for keeping their literature. Computers, particularly their word processing software, are the latest tools for that matter (Palmquist & Zimmerman, 1999). Computers enable writers to easily create, revise, modify, keep, edit and publish texts to name a few. As was mentioned earlier, some states in the U.S. mandate a computer command on the part of teachers for certification. Students also feel an ever-increasing need for computers in their academic endeavor. Almost every job requires strong writing and computing skills. Actually such computer skills are no longer optional, they are a requirement; they are a necessity for almost every application.

A computer-aided writing class (CAWC) will be loosing its point if it is meant to merely duplicate the characteristics and effectiveness of the face-to-face classroom. Thus, it should use the powers of the computer to enhance what can normally be done in a faceto-face classroom. As we have seen earlier, the internet-based blackboard platform, particularly the discussion board provided features for asynchronous discussions and communication, sophisticated question and response facility, and other group learning tools that a traditional classroom by no means can provide.

Of course, we all know that the computer as a device does not help its users to be better writers in the sense that if you use it, you will be a good writer, and if you do not, you will be a terrible writer. Just as a well-equipped playground makes it comfortable, easy and handy for players to play, exercise and move around easily, the application of computers in writing facilitates and capacitates the process of writing. Among the many benefits is the fact that it provides quick and handy revisions of papers. Students never have to rewrite the whole thing. They can just omit, add, insert, permutate, move around, and cut and paste the bits and pieces of the written papers. In case of a need, they have access to external links, which empower them to consult and make use of other resources, as was the case in this course. The application of computers in writing makes weeding out mistakes easier and faster. Thus, it helps learners to write more effectively and efficiently. It helps them to easily locate and evaluate information, and to better organize data for later use. Moreover, it provides them with the necessary guidance to help them establish a solid foundation for continued development of both their writing and computing skills and capabilities.

Although very similar, the different operating systems of computers, especially software, are always in a constant change, however, the writers' needs are less changeable; they are pretty much the same. Word processing software was created primarily to enable people to write quickly and efficiently on the computer. The constantly added functions are intended to speed up the writing process. Writing on the computer can in no way compare with pen/pencil and paper, or typewriters. Computer-aided classes have the potential to utilize the capabilities of a computer to cater for students' writing needs.
Besides the enormous facilities of the typing process, editing commands that are available to, or ready for writing on a computer, make writing faster, easier, more comfortable and more amusing. Commands such as 'select', 'move', 'delete', 'cut', 'copy, 'paste', 'undo', 'redo' and 'repeat' are the basic commands that help facilitate the writing process. Thus, the application of computers in writing has the advantage of giving the writer a handy editor at his/her disposal to polish their documents and improve their writing. These features of computers significantly eased the burden of the learners. The application of computers in writing has the advantage of not worrying about spelling, diction, grammar and style problems and only concentrating on contents and ideas. Multiple drafts are almost inevitable for students of writing; thus computers are efficient tools for saving time through using and reusing (recycling) previous drafts. Computers are very efficient tools for editing documents. Writers make use of spelling checkers, grammar and style checkers, insert, cut, paste and drag texts, formatting and design tools and find and replace commands to fasten the editing processes. The application of computers in writing has fringe benefits as well; it enhances ones typing abilities and computer literacy.

Computers are helpful time savers, or at least are intended to be so. They allow students to save as many copies as they need. Should a student lose a file, retrieving a backup file (normally a copy of a file that is stored in a different place) takes far less time than redoing it from scratch. This can never be the case with pen/pencil and paper writing. Writing on a computer renders the advantage of having valuable helping resources at the students' heels, ready for their disposal. Such resources include: (1) Style Manuals (2) Grammar & Usage Guide, and Dictionaries; Appendix (K) contains a list of

writing resources such as books on writing and information gathering. This dissertation, of course, does not encompass all the functions and merits of computers, and it never intended to. Actually, computer functions are vastly numerous; they cannot be included in a dissertation of this size.

Discussion:

Due to various reasons, computer-aided education (CAE) may be the only option for a certain portion of learners to further their education. Thus, this option should not be closed to those people, especially after the constantly increasing success of such courses that can provide people with education pertinent to all aspects of their lives either at home, or in their work places. Matching course formats with students' needs, attitudes and learning strategies is significant in enhancing their learning performance. Learning outcomes are always positively affected by student preferences to course formats. This means that in (CAE), it is important to understanding students' attitudes to course delivery formats and how they interact with learning strategies to enhance the overall learning outcome.

The researcher is convinced that there are benefits to both computer-aided education (CAE) as well as to traditional settings. Thus, he believes that combining the best aspects of each could be the best approach to create a setting, which is most beneficial for students learning how to globally think and interact in writing. Internetbased learning will prepare students for the challenges they might face as educational institutions explore deeper into the information age. By exposing our students to resources such as the World Wide Web (WWW), we are providing them with an

education that will prepare them for the kinds of thinking and writing they will be expected to do once they are out in their real life world.

As the Internet affects our lives across all disciplines, those who can write and think quickly and critically will be the ones who are ultimately successful in what is the goal for most human beings - to communicate (Anderson, 1997). This indicates that those who do not possess fluency in the use of computers and writing will likely be left behind not only on college campuses, but in their work places as well. To keep ahead in almost every aspect of life, everyone must possess computer literacy and proficiency. In education, especially, the advent of the computing age has brought with it a radical interference into the pedagogical foundations of teachers' work. The use of computer technology and the growing access to educational resources through the Internet are requiring educators to rethink how they teach, and help students to prepare for life. Moreover, as intercultural connections in academia and the work place increase, it is equally important for both instructors and writing students to write for a global audience throughout making use of the Internet. Nowadays, synchronous approaches to education are no longer a condition for education, simply because asynchronous education becomes very applicable in the computer age. Thus, computer-aided education is by itself a paradigm shift in modern education. If we agree that the paramount goal of (CAE) is solely educational, then it has the potential of ruling out all the barriers of discrimination that people use against each other in so many aspects of their everyday contacts. That is because significance is lent to the job performed rather than the person performing it.

The researcher believes that the students in this writing course have learned a great deal about the technical and pedagogical aspects of CAW courses. However, the

computer as a teaching tool or instrument cannot function without a rational utilization of as many different teaching tools in the classroom as possible. These tools need to be appealing to a wide variety of learners' and teachers' styles, abilities, interests, and strategies. So, the application of the Internet-based blackboard as a tool in the writing classroom does not presume giving up established teaching and learning tools, which have helped students in the past. Rather, the Internet-based blackboard platform can add to and improve upon what writing instructors have been doing for years, i.e. teaching writing in a student-centered, communicative and collaborative classroom environment. The blackboard platform lent itself in helping students extend their learning beyond what the traditional classroom offers by improving their ability and confidence to write more effectively.

Certainly, the interaction of all the interrelated elements such as the instructor, computer, students and writing environment can create an atmosphere where the multiple writing dimensions can mesh elegantly. This particular Internet-based course provided students with opportunities for:

- Excellent environment like that of a well-equipped playground to players.
- Collaboration with other students.
- Student responsibility.
- Time management.
- Motivation & enjoyment of the learning process.
- Development of computer skills.
- Good environment that helps increase their writing efficiency.

- Content development along with writing process.
- Timely chances for interaction between instructor, computer and students.
- Enjoyment.

Furthermore, using various functions of the Internet, such as the email and the Web, could help students further develop their skills in reading (including skimming and scanning), writing for specific purposes and audiences, and, most of all, critical thinking.

As indicated earlier, most students who participated in this study took the course as a requirement for their program. The sample itself was relatively small, thus the conclusions are cautiously offered regarding computer-aided writing courses. It is true that only one student failed the course, however, only two students got 'the average' grade (B), and eight scored below 'the average' grade (B- and below). Only one student got a grade of (A). There were some significant factors behind that:

- (1) This was the students' first course in writing at the college level.
- (2) The fact that students did not make use of the vast amount of information available through the Web.
- Writing as a craft is not a mathematical formula, or a few lines of poetry that can be learnt by heart over night.

Actually, writing is a complex multifaceted craft, where multi-factors are interdependent and in play. Thus, it has never been, and it can never be a business of one course or two; it is actually an accumulative lengthy project. So, all what mattered was the noticeable and steady progress on the part of our subjects. What this course might be held accountable for was whether or not the subjects showed improvement in quality, and a

decrease in the number of mistakes throughout the three papers. As was shown in chapter (4), the slope of mistakes showed that papers number two and three had fewer mistakes and were of better quality than paper number one. The same applied to drafts two and three of every paper. This assumes that the course made a positive difference in the students' writing. This progress needs to be supplemented by additional computer assisted courses.

Implications

A. For Teaching:

In this section, I will discuss the most important outcomes of this computer-aided English 099 writing course based upon my research and observations. The researcher considers computer-aided learning (CAL) as a natural progression of the current methods of teaching and learning. The computer can foster a surprisingly close relationship between teachers and students. It creates a community of writers within the class. It also creates studentship skills such as exchanging ideas and peer reviewing; moreover, it fosters critical thinking literacy.

In this writing course, some students believed that a detailed written comment carried more authority and impact than spoken remarks do. Some students showed eagerness to start a real dialogue, sharpening their writing skills still further as they argued their points. Thus, instructors should be aware of their significant role as facilitators; their job is to create the vital learning environment for their students. They are never supposed to do the students' job or homework. Thus the computer is the best device as yet that lends itself generously and constantly catering for the learners' needs. So, as it is the job of the travelers to search the web for issues related to the weather, roads, rates, air flights etc., and as it is the job of the shoppers to search the computer for the best deals, it is now the job of learners to adequately search the computer for whatever significant for their learning progress. After the advent of computers, there is no excuse for anybody not to get sufficient information about any topic in whatsoever field of knowledge within minutes. In the same token, students should do the learning by themselves to cater for their own academic needs and to learn better. Students in this English 099 writing class have benefited more from the potentials of the 'External Links', let alone the other features of computer. Grabinger & Dunlap (1996) developed the following list that enhances certain characteristics for active learners:

- Student responsibility and initiative to promote ownership of learning and transferable skills.
- Intentional learning strategies, explicit methods of learning, reflection on learning processes, metacognitive skills.
- Goal driven, problem solving tasks and projects generating learning products of value.
- Teachers as facilitators, coaches and guides, not sources of knowledge, requiring discussion between teachers and learners.
- > Authentic contexts for learning, anchored in real world problems.
- > Authentic assessment strategies to evaluate real-world skills.
- Cooperative learning.

This list highlights the importance of making computer-aided learning (CAL) studentcentered. So, the student needs to generate direction, motivation and objective from his/her own self. What is special about a computer-aided approach to learning is that it can start with learners from the basics and take them as far as they can go. That is to say that learning depends on the individual's pace, i.e. not slowed down by low-paced learners. The researcher believes that computer-aided writing (CAW) is among the best methods to date that can help developing writers rather than pieces of writing. CAW provides writers with versatile techniques that help them to grow; meanwhile, it covers for considerable areas of potential weakness. Thus, it is the researcher's conviction that the students themselves play a significant role in making a course like this a success or a failure.

In an attempt to facilitate the learning process, Jonassen (1995) has identified seven key learning strategies necessary for successful learning with technology:

- Active: the active learning model advocates the independent building of knowledge by the student. "Learners are engaged by the learning process in mindful processing of information, where they are responsible for results" (Jonassen, 1995, p.60).
- Constructive: learning is an active process in which learners construct their new ideas or concepts based on their current or past knowledge. "Learners accommodate new ideas into prior knowledge (equilibrating) in order to make sense or make meaning or reconcile a discrepancy, curiosity, or puzzlement" (Ibid, p. 60).

- Collaborative: "Learners work in learning and knowledge building communities, exploring each other's skills while providing a social support and modeling and observing the contribution of each member" (Ibid, p. 61).
- Intentional: A crucial point in the intentional learning approach addresses selfdiscovery. "Learners are actively and willfully trying to achieve a cognitive objective" (Jonassen, et. al., 1994).
- Conversational: "Learning is inherently a social, dialogical process in which learners benefit most from being part of knowledge building communities both in class and outside school" (Jonassen, 1995, p. 62).
- Contextualized: "Learning tasks are situated in some meaningful real-world task, or are simulated through some case-based learning environment" (Ibid, p. 62).
- Reflective: "Learners articulate what they have learned and reflect on the process and decisions that were entailed by the process" (Ibid, p. 63).

The above-mentioned strategies highlight the key factors in the student-centered learning approach. The ideal situation in a computer aided learning environment is to see students setting their goals, taking initiative and responsibility in their learning enterprise. The instructor should be no more than a facilitator who is coaching from the peripheries. This by no means indicates that the researcher believes in the common misconception and myth that the "computer will replace instructors". The researcher strongly believes that the computer/internet are no more than mere educational tools that can hardly kick the instructor out of the picture. The similitude between the computer and any other vehicle is that both require a driver who steers them wherever s/he wants. Moreover, and as the term suggests, 'learners' need an inventive and knowledgeable leader who can create a

learning environment, which is most beneficial to each particular group of them, which, as we all know, varies from semester to semester, or even section to section. Computer programs do not take into consideration individual students' characteristics, learning styles or abilities. In addition, a computer cannot adjust a lesson based on the emotional state of an individual or group of students on any given day. Thus, without the guidance of a teacher even in learner-centered activities, computers will do little to help student progress. As a result, though the roles of teachers in the classroom may change, the need for teachers will not (Berge & Collins, 1995).

Another myth indicates that "getting students through Internet equals teaching". Actually, it is not enough to simply get students using the Internet, or to expose them to online resources. The same as with any language-teaching tool, teachers must have clear, well-focused teaching (and not just technical) objectives and goals for each writing assignment. Furthermore, it is important to make these goals clear to the students from the beginning of any task. Therefore, to be an effective educational tool, technology must have strong pedagogical foundations. Actually, instructors must keep pedagogical goals in focus whether with or without technology as an educational tool. The same as any tool the instructor brings to the classroom, use of the computer must have a pedagogical focus that is clear not only to the instructor himself, but to the students as well. Otherwise, students are likely to get caught up in the technological aspect of an activity, losing focus of their primary goal of acquiring and enhancing their writing skills (Roybler, 2000).

B. Further Implications for Classroom:

The researcher has found out that interaction among students was a key element for a successful CAW class. During the researcher's casual interviews with the students, a recurrent theme kept reappearing- that is students would have preferred more interaction between themselves. Student # 8 once indicated that,

"Personally, I think that students can individually take care of lectures and the reading materials, but the discussion part must be held by real time chatting/talking because it gives the instant response and elaboration."

The researcher also realized that just accessing the WWW on the part of the students was not enough. They, actually, need focused tasks to help them best utilize the Web. Thus, instructors should create interactive activities, which involve WWW. For example, students can work in pairs or groups to do research projects via WWW. Students can also work collaboratively to publish their writings, or create and publish class web pages. Through the creation process of the class web pages, they can explore WWW, and share their discoveries with the whole class.

While the student-centered classroom is still gaining ground as a concept in trendy pedagogical theories, the reality is that many traditional classrooms still focus on the teacher. However, computer-aided teaching brings with it an underlying assumption or belief that the more students do for themselves, the more learning will take place (Hiltz, 1990; Warschauer, et. al., 1994; Berge & Collins, 1995). That is why the very nature of the Internet-based learning is advantageous to student-centered learning and a subsequent empowerment. Along these same lines, the practical teacher-student relationship in the computer-aided classroom is more balanced than the traditional norm

in which teachers are all-knowing and students are subjugates, who recurrently turn to them as experts.

Teacher training on using the Internet-based learning must include new pedagogy as well as technology. Knowledge on how to use the functions of the Internet is not enough to prepare instructors for using it as an educational tool. Bringing the Internetbased knowledge successfully into the classroom (or the classroom onto the Internetbased knowledge) requires training in not only the mechanics of how to use the technology, but the philosophies of how and why to use it in teaching as well. While current pedagogical theory encourages the student-centered classroom, the computer-aided learning experience necessitates it. No matter whether the course is structured (i.e. conducted synchronously or asynchronously), it is most likely that students are the ones who will bear the primary responsibility for their own learning. If the class is taken for credit, students will indeed interact with one another, and deadlines become very important, as students who fall behind may negatively impact the class dynamic and progress. Internet-based functions can be used not only as means of classroom facilitation, but also as language learning tools in and of themselves.

Moreover, the Internet-based learning lends itself naturally to collaborative, communicative and task-based classes, which are, of course, student-centered. Student # (7) said:

"We (students in the class) benefit from each other's drafts; we help each other. I do my writing first. Then I let my friends edit it for me before I hand it over to the professor." Students become empowered to direct questions to their instructors when they feel more secure about the method through which they are asking these questions. During my

observations, I always noticed that students asked questions, commented on and discussed ideas, edited other people's efforts and got their own writings edited by others too. In addition to the practical aspects of using the 'discussion board', students in this course gained writing, reading and critical thinking skills. They realized that they communicate with knowledgeable audience, who would read what they wrote. One of the ESL students in the class once mentioned:

"Earlier I was not sure that I can write something understandable, but now I always get responses. This means they understand me"

The thread that students used to add to the 'discussion board' was a great introduction to the concept of writing for a real audience with purposes extending beyond writing for a grade. Responses might go back and fourth if there is a need to negotiate a meaning or share a thought. Students actually practiced reading and writing while participating in the discussions. Students in general, particularly ESL students, were reluctant to express their ideas in writing. The discussion board was an excellent arena that helped them get rid of this problem. Actually, the more students wrote, the more comfortable they got with it, especially because their writing took place in such a lively communicative context. Every addition of a new thread was for the purpose of sharing ideas with the class members.

The Web-based External links and the Web were real world examples of integrated knowledge and rich sources of authentic language and culture materials. They were sources of timely and abundant information, building critical thinking skills, and good potentials for future online publishing. Furthermore, they were excellent resources for students to develop their critical thinking skills by sifting through and gathering information from the Web for future projects. The Web is becoming an increasingly

integral part of communication in this information age. The researcher believes that for higher-level courses, the most innovative and empowering use of the Web in the writing classroom would be for students' publishing. Writing for publication on the Web provides the opportunity for a communicative, collaborative, student-centered and taskbased classroom. Students can be very motivated by having a real audience and an authentic purpose for writing. In realizing what information will appear under their names, students will be highly aware of the audience for whom they are writing.

In their peer reviews, they used to ask each other questions about the pertinence of information to their audience. As a result, students' confidence and interest in writing would go up. Peer review activities are especially effective for multiple-draft assignments, but can be used for other types of assignments as well. This benefits writers by letting them receive feedback from several readers and benefits readers by giving them practice at critical reading and constructive criticism. The researcher believes that, in the future, when the students are given the opportunity to communicate authentically with their 'global readers', they will be motivated to write with greater enthusiasm and clarity than when writing only for one audience, i.e. the instructor. This helps them to extend their learning beyond the classroom itself and out into the "real world". They can use the Internet for communication and collaboration with learners and educators worldwide.

Logistically, distributing course materials through the Internet-based course page can be more saving in terms of time, money and paper. Moreover, storing course materials and assignments on the internet-based course page allows students to retrieve them at their convenience. In the traditional classroom setting, if a student does not come

to class, s/he must either meet the teacher outside of class to get the materials s/he missed or remind the instructor to bring one session's work to the next (along with the handouts for the current session as well). Internet-based distribution places more responsibility on the student.

C. Implications for Instructors of Similar Courses:

- The researcher has noticed that dividing the weekly meetings with the students
 into three one-hour sessions was not very effective. Writing is a time consuming
 process, thus, a one-hour session was barely enough to do the basic requirements.
 So, if the three sessions were put together in a one three-hour session, that would
 give the students a better chance to do an uninterrupted job. They would definitely
 edit each other's writing more efficiently. Moreover, they would more likely be
 supervised by the professor when consulting external links, which in turn would
 provide more supervised and focused use of their time and effort.
- 2. The findings indicated that the computer-aided learning (CAL) could be insignificant unless students make use of the vast resources that are a few clicks away from them. What matters in this course was to teach the students how to be independent thinkers. Students should be directed to the vast sources of help at their disposal; they should be encouraged to be resourceful and self-dependent.
- 3. It was noticeable that students in this class needed more acute experiences in manipulating computers. That was clear from their inefficient use of the Web resources to benefit and expand their knowledge. It is true that all the students can surf the Web, however, so many more computer skills were constantly needed by the students to manipulate computers efficiently. It is true also that additional and

dynamic students' involvement helps them a lot in learning many computer skills. One of the major tenets of constructivist learning environment requires further investigation to gain deeper and sharper understanding of the subject matter to be learned.

- 4. Participants in this course have spent all their school life in a traditional classroom. Computer- aided learning (CAL) was a significant change for most of them. They might have felt a need for a transitional period to familiarize themselves with this new protocol of learning. There are, of course, definite advantages of being familiar with the learning materials. So, the course must have been easier for those who were better versed or those who have already developed solid computer literacy. This computer literacy is a crucial part of the students' readiness and preparedness for the course. The researcher never meant that students need a degree in computer science to do well in this course. However, competence in the technology was significant, vital and a plus.
- 5. The researcher has noticed that although there was a significant decrease in the number of mistakes in the multiple drafts of the students' papers, still, there was no big difference in the content of the multiple drafts. The content stayed pretty much the same except when the instructor suggested a new idea or asked a clarifying question that triggers thinking of new elaborative ideas. This indicated that the students were contented with just clearing the papers up from the 'current' errors. They did not seriously try to elaborate on, or come up with new ideas that might add new dimensions to the content. So, the computer's ability to keep old copies was a mixed blessing. This, of course, used to be the case with

pen/pencil and paper writing. In ideal situations this should not be the case. So, instructors should pay attention to this flaw on the part of their students.

D. Practical Considerations Before Teaching Internet-Aided Courses:

Actually, no one can say computer-aided courses (CACs) are the only proper mode for all faculty or all students. Faculty should be ready and "expecting the unexpected" to happen. Although the results of the questionnaires (Appendixes B), the survey Appendix (D), the open-ended questionnaire (Appendix C), and the field notes showed that students in this course liked this medium better than the traditional way, instructors in general need to be vigilant that some may strongly dislike it. In order for them to succeed, students must have convenient access to a computer and modem, motivation, and self-discipline. Students lacking the necessary computer skills, motivation and self-discipline cannot be expected to succeed; they may do better in a traditionally delivered course. As a teaching environment, CACs provide a set of tools, strengths, and limitations, which are available to the instructor for delivering course materials and structuring learning experiences. Before initiating any internet-aided course, instructors need to make sure of the following aspects:

- 1. Prior student knowledge of Internet functions.
- 2. Trouble-free Student use of, and access to Internet.
- 3. Student motivation and active participation.

Thus, instructors need to know that just as there is no single method for successful teaching in the traditional classroom, there are also diverse techniques and methods that can be successful in a computer-aided environment. Instructors should keep on modifying their methods and strategies that they initially chose on the basis of their observations about the level of, ability and motivation of their students. Two basic principles should be kept in mind for successful teaching in the computer-aided classroom (CAC); these are dealing with organization and interaction:

 Organization: The class has to move through the components together, in order for interaction to be meaningful.

2. **Interaction:** Probably the greatest determinant of the extent to which students feel that the (CAC) is better or worse than traditional modes is the amount and quality of interaction between the instructor and the students, and/or among the students themselves. This is not always easy, but if the instructor managed to persuade the students into this collaborative approach to learning, they will share ideas with each other in a way that can never or seldom be seen in a traditional classroom.

The Act of Writing in this Course:

Most people agree that writing is a product of talent and constant practice, and is nearly as individual as our physical features. Writing is never a linear process; writers kept shifting from one process to another. Sometimes they generate ideas, at other times they revise, draft, organize or trash the whole texts. The major writing processes are normally: generating ideas (brainstorming) or 'invention', collecting information,

planning, drafting, reviewing and editing. These processes can be done individually or collaboratively.

The following diagram illustrates most of the writing activities and the writing strategies that were applied by students in this course:



Recommendations:

Since computer skills benefit students in all university level courses, the researcher recommends facilitating the use of computers across the curriculum. Teachers and students should be trained on how to use the technology, not only technically, but pedagogically as well. This will empower both learners and instructors, who are keen on best preparing their students for a future of lifelong learning and success in the real world.

Bearing in mind that this research was limited in scope to one computer-aided class, thus, the recommendations should be limited to similar courses. More similarly formatted courses are needed to complement or contradict the results, conclusions and recommendations of this study. Based on the quantitative and qualitative data collected for this study, and the personal judgment of the researcher, the following recommendations might be useful for future studies:

- Since this computer-aided writing course depends to a great deal on wordprocessing and the Internet-based Blackboard, instructors should be pretty sure that their students have an adequate and efficient knowledge in both areas before they start the course. Universities in general offer training courses for that matter. Students are taught how to integrate computers as instructional media in their academic life. If students join a computer aided class with a solid computer background in hand, their attitude, motivation and performance will be positively different.
- Writing should be viewed as a recursive process. Actually, when students write, they go through a process of thinking, writing and revising, followed by more

thinking, more writing, and more revising. In this way, they develop and improve their critical thinking and writing abilities. Thus, instructors should not treat writing as a product rather than a part of a process. By doing so, they teach students the benefits of drafting and revising.

- When evaluating papers, instructors should evaluate writing as part of a process, be aware of student reactions to their comments, and provide clear, helpful comments. Instructors should mark early drafts and papers encouragingly. On the first paper, it may be best to provide feedback without giving grades. Focus on two or three main areas needing improvement. Limiting comments improves the likelihood that students will attempt to improve the paper. Other areas needing improvement can be dealt with in turn. If we agree that writing is a process; in the same token, we should agree that the act of improving writing is a process too. Surface revisions might be trivial; a student might need to significantly revise a piece of writing until it communicates what s/he is trying to say. If instructors keep this in mind when designing and evaluating writing assignments, they are in the right track in directing students to become competent writers (see Zeiser, P. 1999).
- Multiple drafts allow instructors to diagnose students' writing problems and identify students who need additional help from a tutor or a writing center. Neither instructors nor students gain much if students hand in one-draft papers only. Students may never look seriously at the instructor's comments when the course is over. Even if students do review the instructor's comments on term papers or finals, they have little incentive to apply his/her advice when writing

papers for other courses. Multiple and frequent writing assignments are particularly effective when they are different but related. A series of assignments that build one upon the other serves two purposes:

First: they make the thinking and writing process visible to students. The more clearly instructors and students understand the purpose of a writing assignment, the more likely they both find it a useful learning experience.

Second: they teach students the benefits of revision and seeking and responding to feedback.

- Computer-aided writing excludes the possibility of single-draft assignments, lastminute terms papers, and one-draft efforts. The application of computers in writing requires students to write to learn. This means that instructors should provide them with opportunities to develop their writing skills and abilities that they need.
- This course should be an excellent scaffold for exclusively online courses, especially when we know that online courses are progressively and steadily gaining ground at the college level. Thus, preparedness for such courses would be an additional service.

A concluding Remark:

The researcher predicted that this educational technology has the potentials to revolutionize education, and its vital role is expected to be readily apparent. Thus, while computer-aided instructional pedagogy is still developing, future researchers are advised to reflect on two things: (1) certain mechanisms and strategies that may help students benefit from the use of computer in writing courses; and (2) to explore online courses in an asynchronous environment.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

University of Cincinnati

Department of Teacher Education

Yusuf Shudooh (513) 942-7661 E.mail <yshudooh@yahoo.com>

Before agreeing to participate in this study, it is important that the following explanation of the proposed procedures be read and understood. It describes the purposes, risks, and benefits of the study. It also describes the right to withdraw from the study at any time. It is important to understand that no guarantee or assurance can be made as to the results.

Purpose:

The purpose of this study is to determine the effect of applying computers in developmental writing classes.

Duration:

The study will take a Quarter (Winter 2002). The researcher will spend the whole Quarter observing the class (3 classes/week; an hour each) and writing notes.

Procedure:

Students registered in this class will do their routine jobs as required by their professor. They will be requested to fill in Appendixes (B, C, D & E). The researcher and the Dissertation committee (the instructor is one of the committee) can access samples of the students' writing and the filled in Appendixes.

Costs

Participation in this study does not involve any expense for the participants.

Benefits:

No benefits are expected by the participants.

Security and Deposition of Data:

Dissertation Committee can access the collected data. However, other than the instructor, the only person who will examine the samples is the researcher. After analysis of data, the samples will be handed back to the instructor. The results of the study will be stated in the Dissertation upon its completion.

Right to withdraw:

Participation in this study is voluntary. Students may withdraw from the study at any time without negative consequences/penalty by letting the instructor 'Dr. Jonathan Alexander (jamma@fuse.net), or the supervisor of the researcher 'Dr. Piyush Swami (piyush.swami.uc.edu) Tel. # 556-3567), or the researcher 'Yusuf Shudooh (yshudooh@yahoo.com), know (verbally, in writing, or via e-mail).

Potential risks:

The grade of this course is neither decided by the researcher nor by any of the Dissertation committee members. Neither the study nor the researcher is in a position to influence the student's grade. So, there are no foreseeable risks of the study.

Confidentiality:

Nothing in the study will refer to the identity of the participants. Just incase, students can choose the names they like (pseudonyms) to appear in any report about the study.

If you have additional questions about this research, you are welcome to contact Yusuf Shudooh, the researcher, or Dr. Jonathan Alexander, the instructor, or Dr. Piyush Swami, the supervisor at the above E-mails.

If you agree to participate in this research, please sign below.

Thanks!

Signature:

Appendix (B)

Background Questionnaire

Please fill out the information in each section as requested. All answers are completely confidential. Submitted data will only be received by the researcher, Yusuf Shudooh. Thank you for your time and effort.

I. General Information:

(

) Spreadsheets

You speak English as: () Native) ESL () EFL () Other (Identify) ------(What degree you are working on? () Bachelor) Other, specify (..... What is your current career goal? **II. Computer Background:** 1. For how many years have you been using computers? (years). 2. Do you have access to a personal computer and Internet at home?) Yes) No ((3. If no, where do you use the computer for this class? 4. What kind of computer software do you use? (Please, check all that apply).) Word Processing (
ons (E-ma specify	il/ Chat,	etc.)					
elf:							
ered this c	ourse dic	l you kno	ow that it w	ould be	delivered v	via	
Yes	()		No ()		
elective co area. traditional specify.	because ourse. writing o	it is: course. is course					
4. In what ways does this course make your life easier/harder?							
bout this c	course th	at traditio	onal writin	g course	cannot off	èr?	······
	ons (E-ma specify elf: ered this c Yes his course elective co area. traditional specify. bect to gain es this cou	ons (E-mail/ Chat, specify elf: ered this course did Yes (his course because elective course. area. traditional writing of specify. pect to gain from th es this course make	ons (E-mail/ Chat, etc.) specify elf: ered this course did you known Yes () his course because it is: elective course. area. traditional writing course. specify. bect to gain from this course es this course make your lif	ons (E-mail/ Chat, etc.) specify elf: ered this course did you know that it w Yes () his course because it is: elective course. area. traditional writing course. specify. bect to gain from this course? es this course make your life easier/hat about this course that traditional writin	ons (E-mail/ Chat, etc.) specify elf: ered this course did you know that it would be Yes () No (his course because it is: elective course. area. traditional writing course. specify. bect to gain from this course? es this course make your life easier/harder? es this course that traditional writing course about this course that traditional writing course	ons (E-mail/ Chat, etc.) specify elf: ered this course did you know that it would be delivered v Yes () No () his course because it is: elective course. area. traditional writing course. specify. bect to gain from this course? course make your life easier/harder? course make your life easier/harder? course that traditional writing course cannot off	ons (E-mail/ Chat, etc.) specify elf: ered this course did you know that it would be delivered via Yes () No () his course because it is: elective course. area. traditional writing course. specify. exerct to gain from this course? est this course make your life easier/harder? est this course make your life easier/harder? est this course that traditional writing course cannot offer?

6. If you have to register for another writing course, will you choose to have it via

computer	or go	back to	traditional	way?	Why?
•••••••	~ 5	000011 00			

() V	/ia computer	() The traditional way
v	Why?		
		· · · · · ·	
7. Hav	e you ever taken other courses via computer prior to this	cours	se? ().
If ye	es, how many? () Course(s).		
8. How	v much time do you devote for this course per week?		
() 3-5 Hours.		
() 6-8 Hours		
() 9-11 Hours		
() More than that.		

Thank you for your cooperation

Appendix (C)

"Open-ended Questionnaire"

- 1. Did you do all your writing on Blackboard, or did you use another word processor?
- 2. Did you notice any particular changes in the way you wrote because you were using Blackboard?
- 3. (Non-U.S. Students only) In your country, did you use a computer, or did you write by hand?
- 4. (Non-U.S. Students only) Were you used to writing on a computer in English, or in your native language?
- 5. When you were using computer, did you write first by hand or directly on computer?
- 6. Whenever you wanted to collaborate with your classmates, how did you use Blackboard?
- 7. Did you use the 'Discussion Board' feature?
- 8. Were there any differences in using Backboard when you were working with a peer compared to when working by yourself?
- 9. Did you E-mail the drafts or papers to your classmates? Was that helpful? More or less convenient than exchanging hard copies?
- 10. Did you ever use the 'Discussion Board' to ask questions about the instructor's or the classmates' comments?
- 11. Did you like the fact that you could send files whenever you want?
- 12. When you send in a paper, how long did it take to get it back?
- 13. During the course, were you able to send papers to your peers for the sake of quick feed back?
- 14. Do you like working with peers on Blackboard, via the Discussion Board? Do you learn better or worse?

- 15. Can you list some specific things that you learned from the comments of your peers?
- 16. Did you find the 'Discussion Board' effective? How?
- 17. Do you spend more or less time on your paper when you use Black Board'? Why?
- 18. Do you exchange files with other students?
- 19. Do you think you write more often in a computer-aided writing-class or in a traditional pen/paper class?
- 20. Which is easier, to see helpers face-to-face, or to communicate through the 'Discussion Board'?
- 21. Are you restricted by time to visit the course site in case you need to add, modify, or respond to anybody? Do you like that?
- 22. Do you believe that computers save or waste more time?
- 23. Do you believe that writing courses through computers open up horizons that traditional writing classes do not? Give examples, please.
- 24. Do you believe that you can further your writing capabilities through computers, e.g. 'External Links'? How?
- 25. Now that you are familiar with the course, do you still feel that you need the instructors at your heels any more? Can you now depend on yourself in improving your writing capabilities? How exactly please?

Thank you for your cooperation

Appendix (D) Survey

The purpose of this survey is to collect information about this English 099 writing course. Please fill out the information in each section as requested. Please answer each question. If you have any question, please feel free to contact the researcher 'Yusuf Shudooh'.

Please indicate how strongly you Agree OR Disagree with each of the following statements:

(1) = (Strongly Agree) (2) = (Agree) (3) = (Disagree)(4) = (Strongly

Disagree) (5) = (No Opinion).

1.	The Blackboard format is appropriate and effective for this course. ().	
2.	The computer enables me to overcome major mechanical problems in writing, as punctuation marks, spelling, documentation and capitalization. (such).	
3.	The computer helps me in diction (the choice of words).	()
4.	The computers helps me in solving a lot of grammatical and syntactic (sentence structure) problems.	e ()
5.	The application of computers facilitates the process of reading related material imitating it in my own writing.	and ()
6.	The application of computers makes writing an easier task for me, so I write spontaneously and more frequently. ().	
7.	How long did it take you to feel comfortable with the technology applied in thi	s course	

to interact **Horizontally** (with other students), **Vertically** (with the instructor), and **beyond** (through External Links)?

(A) I was always comfortable		().
(B) I became comfortable during the first 1/3 of the course		().
(C) I became comfortable after the first $1/3$ of the course	()	
(D) I am still uncomfortable with this course		()
8. This course does not have positive impact on my learning.	().	

9. Computer-assisted instruction allows me to perform to the best o	f my acade	emic	
ability.	().	
10. The sequence of activities was meaningful; it maximized my in	volvement	as a	
beginning writer.		().
11. The activities promoted spontaneity in me as a beginning writer	r. ().	
12. This computer-assisted course complements and compliments t	he way I lil	ke to wri	te.
		().
13. This course encouraged me to exercise my writing creativity.		().
14. The course material encouraged me to interact with the Web.	().	
15. This computer-assisted course stimulated me to read extra mate	rial related	to writin	ıg.
		().
16. I was comfortable in asking for clarification from the instructor using e-mail and/or 'Discussion Board' when I need help.	and/or oth	er studer).	its
17. I made comments on other students' assignments using the 'Dis	scussion Bo	oard'.	
		().
 I got feedback from the instructor and/or other students through 'Discussion Board' 	e-mail and	l/or the).	
19. The Web interaction has increased my writing capabilities.	().	
20. When something in this course was not known to me, it was easusing the Web resources.	sy to get cla	arificatio (n).
21. I learned from the 'discussion board' comments made by the ot assignments.	her student (s on my).	
22. Participating in writing comments on others students' efforts in	nproves my	r own	
writing capabilities		().
23. Since this course is Internet-based, I feel more comfortable aski questions.	ing awkwa	rd ().
24. This course encouraged me to seek resources beyond the scope	of a regula	r	

classroom. (). 25. Doing assignments for this class were more difficult than doing assignments for a traditional writing class.). 26. Peer reviews in this course helped to improve my writing skills. (). 27. Because this is an Internet-based course, I waste more time than I would in a traditional writing class.). ***** 28. How *many times* do you think you used e-mail during this Quarter? (). 29. How many times during the Quarter did you meet face to face with the instructor? (). ***** 30. In order of priority, please list the positive aspects of your experience with the technology used in this course: 31. In order of priority, please list the barriers, if there are any, to your successful use of computer-aided technology as it was used in this course. 32. Are there any other concerns or suggestions that you want to share regarding this computer-aided course?

Thank you so much for your time and effort

Appendix (E)

We are evaluating this English '099' writing course. We hope you will help us with this evaluation by answering this questionnaire. You do not need to put your name on this, and your instructor has nothing to do with it.

(A):

1. I enjoyed using computer to send and receive papers from my instructor.

Yes No difference

2. I enjoyed working with my classmates using computers.

Yes ----- No difference -----

3. I felt I the comments my instructor and classmates sent me on computer were helpful.

Yes ----- No Difference -----

4. I think using computers helped my writing.

Yes ----- No difference ------

5. I would like to take another course in writing using computer.

Yes ----- No difference -----

6. Sending & receiving files & comments by computers were not effective.

Yes ----- No difference -----

7. By the end of the course, I felt I understood how to use computers for writing purposes.

Yes ----- No difference -----

8. I enjoy sending papers electronically rather than handing in hard copies of them.

Yes ----- No difference -----

(B)

9. Which features of computers did you find most useful? (Number them according to

usefulness).

----- Spell check

----- grammar

----- on-line capabilities

- ----- Thesaurus (word choice)
- ----- Word count
- 10. Compared to the word processor you most frequently use, is the blackboard better or worse on the following features?

Word processing	Better	Worse	No difference.
Spell check	Better	Worse	No difference.
Sending & receiving files	Better	Worse	No difference.
Revising papers	Better	Worse	No difference.
Receiving comments	Better	Worse	No difference.

Thank you so much for your time and effort

Appendix (F)

Syllabus Preparatory Composition 17-ENGL-099 Winter 2002

Professor:Dr. XXXXXOffice:3303 XXXXXPhone:556-1769Email:xxxxx@fuse.netMailbox:4428 French Hall (the Language Arts Department Office)Office hours:Monday through Friday 11-12. Other times by appointment.

Basic Introduction to the Course

What is this course?

English 99 is a 3-hour basic writing course in which we will work on developing your writing skills. Specifically, this course focuses on the basics of expository writing. We will work extensively with the Hacker handbook, which includes writing instruction, and the novel, *Parable of the Sower*, which will form the basis for the paper assignments. Those papers will be reviewed by the class on workshop days and by me when you hand them in on due dates. After I have reviewed your essays, I will return them to you for revision before the end of the quarter when you will place both the version I commented on and the revised version in the portfolio to be reviewed by a Language Arts Department portfolio review committee. In addition, there will be multiple daily assignments to practice and develop the writing skills we will be reviewing. For instance, you are required to keep either an electronic journal or a handwritten journal. Journal entries will consist of daily assignments (listed in the daily schedule).

What's so special about this class?

First of all, it's a University College class, and this is the one college on campus that puts teaching first. Unlike the other colleges, we hire faculty members primarily because they are good teachers. Second, each PC class is small, limited to only 18 students. In addition, on Mondays and Fridays, two professional tutors will be in class to work with you individually or in small groups.

How does this course count towards my English requirement?

You will receive 3 hours of college credit for this course, and the grade you earn counts in your grade point average (GPA). However, PC does not fulfill your College Composition requirement (which is fulfilled by successfully completing English 101, 102, and 103).

How do I know I'm in the right course?

You were registered for this course based on your Placement Test scores. We will be checking the database to make sure that you are in the right course. If you did not take the Placement Test, see Dr. Rebecca Borah immediately; ask me for details about arranging an appointment with her.

What is the purpose of this course?

Prep. Comp. is designed to help you improve your use of language, particularly written language. The course is designed to help you develop and demonstrate the reading and writing skills that you will need to be successful in your next English composition course. PC should also help you succeed with the reading and writing aspects of your other college courses and in your career.

Why does UC have a Student Code of Conduct and how will it be used in this class?

UC wants to provide a positive learning environment for all its students. We believe that it is important that students conduct themselves appropriately when they are in a college classroom. The University of Cincinnati Student Code of Conduct is the legal document designed to maintain this positive environment. The Code specifically prohibits such inappropriate behavior as academic dishonesty (like cheating and plagiarism), destruction of university property, and disruptive behavior in classes. Students in violation of the Code will be penalized. Academic dishonesty will result in either an F for the assignment or the course. Disruptive behavior may result in a grade penalty, suspension from the class, or expulsion from the University. Our goal is to maintain UC as a productive place for the vast majority of students who take their education seriously.

Things You Will Need

What books do I need to buy for this course?

Butler, Octavia. *Parable of the Sower*. Available at the UC Bookstore. *The American Heritage Dictionary*, or a "good" college dictionary. (paperback edition). Available at DuBois or UC Bookstore. Hacker, Diana. *A Writer's Reference*. (4th edition). Available at DuBois or UC Bookstore.

What else do I need to buy?

8 1/2 x 11 inch lined paper for assignments not done on computer.A 3 1/2 inch floppy disk (formatted for PCs) for saving your work done on computer.A small case for your computer disk.A highlighter for marking your revised papers.A pocket folder for your portfolio.

Will we use email in this class? Yes.

Does UC have an email account for me?

Yes. You should already have instructions for using your account through the university. If you have an email address, let me know what it is and how often you check it. If you do not have an email address, many students simply open accounts with Hotmail or Yahoo, both of which are free accounts accessible through most any Web browser.

Grading Procedures

How will I be graded during this course?

As you work on your essays this quarter, they will not receive grades. Your grades will not be assigned until the end of the quarter—after you have been able to revise. I believe that students should not be graded on early drafts because that would be grading based on the knowledge students bring to class rather than on what they learn during the class. At the end of the quarter, your portfolio (not each essay) will receive a grade. That grade will be based on the following set of criteria.

Portfolio Grade:

If your portfolio passes portfolio review, it will be evaluated using the following criteria:

A This grade is reserved for portfolios whose papers are excellent in thought, organization, and style. The A portfolio will have papers that use a sound organizational strategy, with clearly developed paragraphs proceeding from a unified thesis. The ideas themselves will be engaging and show illuminating insights into the subject. Assertions will be supported by evidence. There will be very few distracting errors in style, diction, or mechanics.

B A B portfolio will have papers that are quite good, but weaker than A papers in some areas. B papers may have good ideas that are marred by some problems of organization and/or style. B papers might be well organized and well written but offer fewer or less significant insights than A papers.

C A C is generally given to a paper that would be called "clearly acceptable, but not exceptional." A C portfolio will contain papers that show a competent understanding of the assigned topic, but whose insights do not go beyond the obvious points that most papers make. A C can also be assigned to an inconsistent portfolio that has papers that show some excellent insights but that fail to tie ideas into unified wholes.

You will earn a C for the course by:

Handing in all of your assignments complete and on time. NO LATE WORK WILL BE ACCEPTED. Absence is not an excuse for late work. Your work is due at the beginning of the assigned class period whether you are present or not. Only in rare circumstances will you be allowed to make up work, and no make up work will be allowed unless you speak with me BEFORE the due date of that work;

Making it clear in your portfolio that you have taken revision seriously;

Writing three ASSIGNED papers (and a portfolio cover letter) that meet the criteria for a C listed above. Though your grade will be on the entire portfolio, a portfolio that contains even one failing essay (including the in-class essay) will receive a failing grade. You cannot pass the class unless your portfolio passes portfolio review;

Making sure all of your assignments show effort and thinking;

Producing a portfolio that is a well organized, polished document when you hand it in for a grade;

Attending class. You are permitted 3 absences; if you miss class a third time you will be asked to drop the course. If you are asked to drop and do not, you will receive an IP for the course. Only

in rare circumstances will absences be considered "excused," and class time missed for an excused absence must be made up in my office or in the peer tutor laboratory;

Being on time for class. If I am more than 10 minutes late to class you can assume that class is canceled and leave; if you are more than 10 minutes late to class you are absent;

Completing assigned reading and discussing related material, which will be reflected by your participating actively in classroom discussions and activities (including participation on the Blackboard Discussion Boards) and by your grades on quizzes;

Showing respect and concern for the contributions of other students and me. This means staying awake during class, not reading the newspaper or anything else not related to the class activities, not carrying on conversations unrelated to the class activities or discussion, and not surfing the net (if we are in a computerized classroom) while class is in progress unless that is one of the class activities;

Completing all daily assignments in your journal.

You will earn a B for the course by:

Meeting the requirements for a C;

Writing three ASSIGNED papers (and a portfolio cover letter) that meet the criteria for a B listed above;

You will earn an A for the course by:

Meeting the requirements for a C; Writing three ASSIGNED papers (and a portfolio cover letter) that meet the criteria for an A listed above;

Some Important Notes:

Plagiarism is the attempt to pass off another writer's ideas or words as your own. Submitting work not written by yourself or supplying work to another person for that purpose will result in your receiving an F for the course.

You are required to be present on paper due dates. Please arrange your schedule so that you do not miss any of these days of class. If you are not present on all of these dates, you will receive an IP for the course.

Late portfolios will not be reviewed. Students who do not submit their portfolios on time will receive an IP for this course.

All portfolios must contain the original, commented-on, versions of every paper and the final, revised versions. Portfolios that do not contain full, significant revisions of all but the in-class essay (the portfolio cover letter) will not be eligible for review. Students whose portfolios are not eligible for review will receive an IP for the course.

Students who do not complete the course work will not be eligible for portfolio review. Students whose portfolios are not eligible for review will receive an IP for this course.

You must purchase all of the texts for the course by the end of the first full week of class. If you have not purchased all of the required texts, you will be asked to drop the course.

All registered University College students are required to pay a technology fee each quarter (assessed as part of your tuition). This fee provides you with an individualized email account and access to the Internet and intranet that you can begin using now. [NOTE: If you have a University College email account from last quarter, you may log on immediately using your old password.] The college's open computer labs are located in L-221 and L-209 Sander Hall and in 4221 French Hall. Any students who do not pay their tuition fees on time will have their classes canceled and email accounts canceled. If you account is canceled and you are not able to work in class, you will be counted absent for the number of days you are unable to log on. Those absences will count against your grade in the same way other absences count against your grade.

If you have a learning disability or need special accommodations to improve your changes of successfully completing this course, then please make sure I have appropriate documentation for such accommodations before the end of the first full week of class.

Is there any way to earn extra credit in this class? No.

What's a portfolio?

A portfolio is a folder containing the work that you have done throughout the quarter. It is, hopefully, a demonstration of what you have achieved.

What do I need to put in my portfolio at the end of the quarter?

Save all drafts of all your papers for your portfolio. The portfolio must include all of the following:

Paper #1, including all prewriting and drafts (assigned on the daily schedule) Paper #2, including all prewriting and drafts (assigned on the daily schedule) Paper #3, including all prewriting and drafts (assigned on the daily schedule) A 100-words-or-less summary of a text (assigned on the daily schedule) An in-class self-evaluation paper about your progress as a writer this quarter

How important is it to turn in a portfolio?

It's essential. Your portfolio MUST pass portfolio review before you can proceed to the next course, English Composition (English 101).

What if I don't earn at least a C-?

You'll earn an IP (In Progress). IP is not a passing grade. The good news is that there is no GPA penalty, but the bad news is that you will have to take the course again and pass before you can go on.

What are some of the reasons students didn't pass this course last year?

Missing classes, not having all the work done, unsatisfactory performance on assignments, missing writing conferences, and getting behind.

If I just stop coming to class, will I get an IP?

No, you'll get a UW (Unofficial Withdrawal), which counts the same as an F.

How can I withdraw from this class without a penalty?

Have your instructor sign an add/drop slip and turn it in on the third floor of French, all before the deadline.

Is it possible to earn an F?

Yes, for plagiarism or academic dishonesty. Plagiarism is taking someone else's words and presenting them as if they were your own. It is considered academic dishonesty, as is cheating on quizzes or tests.

When I pass PC, what's the next English class I take?

English Composition 101. It's a 3-hour writing course that you take right before you go into English 102.

Why does UC have all these English requirements, anyway?

For most careers that require a college degree, you will need strong communication skills: reading, writing, speaking, and computer literacy. This course is designed to help you develop skills in these areas.

Support for this Class

How can I contact my instructor?

My office hours are on the syllabus. You can drop in any time during office hours, and I am usually in my office other times as well. You can always make an appointment by seeing me before or after class or phoning or emailing me.

Are there tutors for this class?

You can drop in to the Writing Center, 4513 French Hall. Writing tutors are available Monday through Friday throughout the quarter to help you with assignments and essays for this course. The Writing Center is free for students, and it is operated on a first-come-first-served basis--no appointments. A reading tutor is available in 4509 French Hall to help students with reading and study skills. You may drop in or make an appointment, and there is no charge for this service.

Can I take another course to help me improve my reading next quarter?

Our college offers many reading courses paired with academic courses. In paired courses, the reading professor helps you with your textbook comprehension, note taking, and exam preparation.

Is there an open computer lab I can work in?

The college has three: 4221 French, and L209 and L221 Sander. All the computers are connected to the Internet. Labs are open 7 days a week while school is in session. Check the schedule on the door.

What if I need help using a computer?

Each University College computer lab is staffed with a Lab Assistant who can help you with the computers. Don't be afraid to ask!

Will the computers in the lab be compatible with my home computer?

The lab computers are IBM compatible PC's. The word processing software is Microsoft Word. Ask the Lab Assistant if you need help opening disks you have used on your home computer. UC has an arrangement with Microsoft which allows students to buy Microsoft Word in the UC Bookstore's computer shop at a very good discount.

Appendix (G)

Preparatory Composition Daily Schedule for Winter 2002

WEEK ONE

F 1/4 In class today:

--Introduction to course, syllabus, and daily schedule. --Introductory discussion of Paper Number One.

Assignment for Monday

- Write Journal One, which tells about yourself as a reader and writer and explain your expectations for this course.
- Buy your books for this class and bring them with you to class on Monday.
- Read Hacker, sections on Planning and Drafting, pages 3-17.
- Do brainstorming for Paper Number One.
- Read Butler, chapters 1-5.

Paper Number One Assignment:

Topic: For your first essay, we would like you to describe the forces in your life that make it difficult for you to change in ways that you feel you should. Perhaps a more specific question is, what societal, cultural or familial expectations make it difficult for you to grow in directions you would like to? You will want to describe your environment and background (but don't give us your WHOLE story!), and think about what kinds of things—either physical or psychological—hold you back from being the kind of person you want to become. Think about Lauren's situation in Parable of the Sower; she has a lot holding her back. How about you? Your essay should be 1,000 words in length—typed, double-spaced, with no more than one inch margins all around.

Hints for choosing an incident to write about:

Remember: Effective narratives often describe relatively minor events that happen in everyday life. It is you, the writer, who gives the incident its meaning and significance by narrating it effectively.

Hints for Brainstorming:

Try several techniques--freewriting, webbing, or listing--and explore several different ideas for your paper. You must have the work done on paper before you get to class. Your journals might help you think about what you want to say in this essay. These might provide you with paper ideas.

WEEK TWO

M 1/7 In class today:

--Hacker navigation exercises, in which we learn more about the Hacker textbook. --Discussion of brainstorming.

Assignment for Wednesday:

Compose a first draft of Paper Number One and bring to class by Friday. Read Butler, chapters 6-10. Write Journal Number Two (see guidelines below).

Suggestions for writing first drafts:

A good portion of your paper should focus on the most significant moment of your explanatory story or your explanatory details and examples.

♥ If you write your first draft on a computer, type your paper double spaced, in 12-point type, and be sure to save your first draft to your own disk. If you write your first draft longhand, be sure to double space. All University College students have accounts on the U College computer network. Labs are in 4201 French Hall and L209A and L221 Sander.

As you write, keep your audience in mind—me, your classmates, and the professors on the portfolio team—and include the details and explanations that they will need to find your story interesting and convincing.

You don't need to spend time doing an exact word count.

Staple your final draft on top of your plan sheet and brainstorming.

W 1/9 In class today:

--Discussion of the revising process: the difference between revising and editing, and the difference between global and sentence-level revision.

--Discussion of first drafts of Paper Number One.

Assignment for Friday:

--Continue working on draft of Paper Number One.

--Continue your reading in Butler.

F 1/11 In class today:

--Continued discussion of the revising process: the difference between revising and editing, and the difference between global and sentence-level revision.

--Continued discussion of first drafts of Paper Number One. Journal Guidelines:

The possibilities for responses to a reading selection are numerous. You may write whatever you want; choose among the following suggestions. Journals need to be one page in length, free written, and not a plot summary.

1. Describe what you think or feel as you read.

- 2. Explore what you like or what interests you most.
- 3. Explore what you don't like or find confusing.
- 4. Explore what you agree and disagree with.

- 5. Relate your own experiences or background knowledge to the reading.
- 6. Raise questions if you don't understand all or part of the reading.

Assignment for Monday:

Review, in Hacker, sections on Global Revising, pages 17-20. Then, write a second draft of Paper Number One. As you write, keep in mind discussions we have had in class about both the readings and the writing of Paper Number One, as well as Hacker's recommendations for Global Revision. Read about run-on sentences (comma splices and fused sentences) in Hacker, pp. 209-214. Read Butler, chapters 11-15. Write Journal Number Three.

Suggestions for preparing your final draft: Your final draft must be typed, following the format on Hacker p. 351. Use twelve-point font size. Staple your final draft on top of your brainstorming, plans, worksheets, and earlier drafts.

WEEK THREE

M 1/14 In class today:

--Discussion of second draft of Paper Number One.

--Peer Review of Paper Number One.

--Review of major sentence-level errors.

Assignment for Wednesday:

--Continue working on Paper Number One.

--Make sure you are caught up on your reading in Butler!

W 1/16 In class today:

--In-class editing of Paper Number One.

Assignment for Friday:

Have your final draft of Paper Number One printed out and ready for editing by the BEGINNING of class!

As you prepare this draft, review the following sections about quotation marks in Hacker: direct quotations (pp. 267-268), quotation marks with periods and commas (p. 270), and quotation marks with question marks and exclamation points (p. 271).

Prepare three questions you have about your essay that you can discuss with your professor. Write them down and bring them with you to class.

Read in Butler!

Making the most of professor's office hours:

While it may be difficult for you to get to my scheduled office hours, please note that I am readily available through email and by the phone. Email me at <u>jamma@fuse.net</u> or call me at 556-1769.

Suggestions for writing summaries:

 \clubsuit When you write your summary, be sure to include the author, name of text, and the main idea (thesis) of the text.

Punctuate the title of the text. Use quotation marks if it is a short story, essay, chapter of a book, short poem, or autobiographical essay. Underline it or put it in italics if it is a book.
Count the number of words in your summary and write the number below it. All words count, even "a," "an," and "the." Ideally, your summary should be no more than about 100 words.
Edit your summary to make sure that there are no spelling, punctuation, verb, or sentence errors.

Make sure all the verbs are in the same tense.

F 1/18 In class today:

Paper Number One is due today! --Discussion of summary writing. *Assignment for Monday*: Read Butler, chapters 16-20 Write Journal Number Four. Write a summary of the first five chapters of *Parable of the Sower*.

Procedures for rewriting papers for a higher grade:

All papers may be rewritten for a higher grade, if these guidelines are followed:

Oue dates for revisions are listed in the daily schedule.

You should go over your rewritten paper with me during my office hours or with a tutor in the Writing Lab, 4515 French Hall, following the guidelines on the Rewrite Sheet

You must hand in the rewritten paper with all previous drafts, prewriting, worksheets, original grade and comments, and the Revision Sheet attached.

WEEK FOUR

M 1/21 Martin Luther King, Jr. Day—NO CLASS

W 1/23 In class today:

--Review of summaries. Your first summary is DUE !!!

--Paper Number One returned and discussed.

--Introductory discussion of Paper Number Two.

Paper Number Two Assignment:

Topic: For your second essay, we are interested in knowing what kind of person you would like to be. If you could draw a picture—in words—of your future self, what would that person be like? What would be your key distinguishing characteristic? In other words, what kind of person

do you envision becoming? In Parable of the Sower, Lauren has a clear vision of who she wants to be; she also faces opposition: from others and even from her own fear of change. How about vou?

Your essay should be 1,000 words in length—typed, double-spaced, with no more than one inch margins all around.

Deadline for dropping a course:

After the add/drop period is over, you will need to take the add/drop slip to your professor and have it signed if you wish to drop a course. It is up to the professor whether you will get a W or an F. I will give you a W if you decide to withdraw from this class.

If you stop coming to class but do not process an add/drop slip, you will earn the grade of UW (Unofficial Withdrawal), which counts as an F.

Add/drop slips can be picked up and turned in on the second floor of French Hall.

Assignment for Wednesday:

Begin revising Paper Number One. Brainstorm ideas for Paper Number Two. Read Butler, chapters 21-25. Write Journal Number Five

F 1/25 In class today:

--Discussion of brainstorming and organization for Paper Number Two.

Suggestions for Brainstorming:

Use the strategy that works best for you for this particular assignment--clustering (or webbing), freewriting, or listing.

You must bring your brainstorming--in writing--to the next class period.

Assignment for Monday:

Read about using italics for book titles in Hacker, 298-99. Write your first draft of Paper Number Two. Finish revising Paper Number One. Use a highlighter to identify all the changes you made--all added or changed paragraphs, sentences, and words, and all added or changed punctuation marks, etc. Staple your new final draft on top of all previous drafts, brainstorming, and worksheets. Finish reading Butler! Write a summary of the last five chapters of Parable of the Sower.

WEEK FIVE

M 1/28 In class today:

--Revisions of Paper Number One are due. Your second summary is DUE!!!

--Group work on global revisions for first drafts of Paper Number Two.

Assignment for Wednesday:

--Continue working on Paper Number Two, revising based on in-class discussion from Monday's class.

W 1/30 In class today:

--Review second draft of Paper Number Two.

--Arrange time for individual conferences, to be held on Friday.

--Discussion of the importance of correcting major mechanical mistakes.

F 2/1 Individual conferences in my office, French 3303. Don't be late!

Assignment for Monday:

Revise your draft of Paper Number Two.

Have your final draft of Paper Number Two printed out and ready for editing by the time class starts on Monday! Staple your final draft on top of all previous drafts, brainstorming, plan sheets, and work sheets.

WEEK SIX

M 2/4 In class today: --In-class editing for Paper Number Two. Assignment for Wednesday: --Finish Paper Number Two!

Priority Registration for Spring Quarter:Priority registration for Spring Quarter classes begins soon!Pick up your registration materials on the second floor of French Hall.To see what classes to take, check the listing for your program in the University College Bulletin.For your next English course, sign up for English 101!

W 2/6 In class today:

--Paper Number Two is DUE! --Discussion of revising Paper Number Two. Assignment for Monday: Start revising Paper Number Two.

F 2/8 In class today:

--Group work on revising Paper Number Two. Assignment for Monday: Continue revising Paper Number Two.

WEEK SEVEN

M 2/11 In class today:

--Introductory discussion of Paper Number Three. Assignment for Wednesday: Brainstorm Paper Number Three. Continue revising Paper Number Two.

Paper Number Two Assignment:

Topic: For your final essay, we would like you to choose one of Lauren's Earthseed verses and explain either how it does or does not apply to your own life. You may want to begin by demonstrating how the verse helps Lauren, and discussing what it means to her; then move toward thinking through how this same verse might work (or might not work) for your life. The best approach would be to pick a "slogan" and then come up with at least two ways (not specific examples) of how the verse is helpful (or not). Then support your ideas with specific examples. You might use bell hooks format as a possible model for your essay's organization. *Your essay should be 1,000 words in length—typed, double-spaced, with no more than one inch margins all around*.

Hints for Brainstorming:

Try several techniques--freewriting, webbing, or listing--and explore several different ideas for your paper. You must have the work done on paper before you get to class. Your journals might help you think about what you want to say in this essay. These might provide you with specific ideas and examples to include in your paper.

W 2/13 In class today:

--Review and discussion of brainstorming for Paper Number Three.

--Arrange individual conferences for Monday.

Assignment for Friday:

Write as much of the body paragraphs of Paper Number Three as you can. Then, write a first draft of your introduction for Paper Number Three. Keep in mind that your thoughts and ideas about what you want to write may change *as you write*.

Continue working on your revision of Paper Number Two.

Spring Quarter Priority Registration Deadline:

Be sure to turn in your completed form by the deadline, or you will have to register during the final registration period.

F 2/15 SPECIAL SESSION—Place TBA! ©

Assignment for Monday:

--Finish revising Paper Number Two. Be sure to turn it in during your conference with all earlier drafts, brainstorming, etc.

--Continue working on Paper Number Three.

WEEK EIGHT

M 2/18 Individual conferences to discuss revisions for Paper Number Two and work toward Paper Number Three! (Don't forget: conferences are in my office, French 3303! Be on time!)

Assignment for Wednesday:

Write a second draft of Paper Number Three, keeping in mind discussions we've had in class and during your conference.

W 2/20 In class today:

--Revisions of Paper Number Two are due.

--Review of organization of Paper Number Three and discussion of drafts.

--In-class work on the body paragraphs of Paper Number Three.

--Peer review of Paper Number Three.

--In-class brainstorming to develop ideas for the conclusion of Paper Number Three.

Assignment for Monday:

Make sure that you have printed out a copy of Paper Number Three, ready for editing, by the BEGINNING of class on Monday! Staple you final draft on top of all earlier drafts, work sheets, and brainstorming.

F 2/22 NO CLASS. Your professor will be attending a required meeting in Washington, D.C. Use this class period to work on your third essay or revisions of essays one or two—and to visit the Writing Lab. I will be expecting a report from the Lab about each of you.

WEEK NINE

M 2/25 In class today: --In-class editing for Paper Number Three. Assignment for Wednesday: --Finish work on Paper Number Three!

W 2/27 In class today:

--Paper Number Three is due!

--Discussion of portfolio assembly.

--Sign up for a conference time on Friday!

Assignment for Friday:

Don't forget: bring your first and second papers with you to the conference AND to class on Monday.

Prepare some notes and questions that you will want to discuss about revising your papers during our conference on Friday!

Last day to withdraw from a class:

To withdraw, fill out an add/drop slip, have your professor sign it, and turn it in on the second floor of French Hall.

F 3/1 Individual conferences to discuss Paper Number Three. Don't be late! 😳

WEEK TEN

M 3/4 In class today:

--In-class work on revising Paper Number Three.

--Review of portfolio requirements and procedures.

--Preview of self-evaluation paper to be written in class on Wednesday.

Assignment for Wednesday:

Work on producing a revised and clean copy of a summary to include in your portfolio.

Bring all graded assignments to class.

Bring all materials for your portfolio: all three essays, your summary, the completed contents sheet, and a pocket folder to put them in.

Continue revising Paper Number Three.

Begin brainstorming your self-evaluation letter.

W 3/6 In class today:

--In-class work on revision of Paper Number Three and portfolio assembly continued.

--Writing of self-evaluation letter for your portfolio.

Assignment for Friday:

--FINISH ALL REVISIONS & FINISH ASSEMBLING YOUR PORTFOLIO!

F 3/8 In class today:

--Finish composing self-evaluation letter in class.

--Prepare final draft of summary for portfolio.

--Finish up any final editing or "cleaning up" revisions for work to be included in your portfolio. --Portfolios are due TODAY!

FINAL EXAM WEEK

Final Exam Week Schedules:

During Final Exam Week, each class is scheduled to meet for one two-hour exam session. Check the Final Exam Schedule in *Learning Opportunities* or the *Newsrecord*. PC does not have a final exam. Instead, you will have a brief exit conference with me.

M 3/11 *Today:* --Portfolio Committee meets to review Portfolios.

T 3/12 Today:

--Brief drop-in conferences in your professor's office to discuss your Portfolio and grade for the course. Your instructor will set office hours for this conference.

Books for next quarter:

Keep your Hacker handbook for your next composition class.

Appendix (H)

COURSES > <u>02W_17ENGL099014</u> > RESOURCES MAIN PAGE

Blackboard Resources

Resources Login | Register | Resource

Welcome!

Welcome to the **Resource Center**, your source for high-quality educational content and information.

STEP 1: Categories

First Time? <u>Click</u> <u>here</u> <u>Take a tour</u> <u>Check out our help</u> <u>section</u> <u>The Student Center</u> <u>The Instructor and</u> <u>Training Center</u>



Art and Music **Business and Management** Computer & Engineering Computer and Information Technology Education Hobbies Languages Legal Literature and Linguistics Mathematics Medicine & Health Physical Education Science Social Sciences and Social Study Vocational



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Appendix (I)

PORTFOLIO SCORING GUIDE FOR BASIC COMPOSITION- ENGLISH (099)

Students in Basic Composition should show adequate skills in the following areas

Rhetorical Knowledge:

- Focus on purpose.
- Indicate some audience awareness.
- Show some ability to make clear assertions and support them.

Critical Thinking, Reading, and Writing:

- Show ability to summarize a text.
- Show ability to integrate another text into an essay.
- Show ability to use another text as support for a thesis.

Processes:

- Show awareness of multiple drafts in creation of successful texts.
- Show evidence of revising, editing, and proofreading.
- Show ability to quote and paraphrase texts.
- Show ability to cite texts.

Knowledge of Conventions:

- Show Knowledge of various kinds of paragraphs.
- Show ability to use introductions and conclusions.
- Show general control of sentence boundaries
- Show general recognition of Syntax, Punctuation, Grammatical and Mechanical problems.

Appendix (J)

The Writing Center!

Ten Ways to Prepare for a Trip to the Writing Center:

Back in the days when I was tutoring in the Writing Center at Virginia Tech, I could always tell who the prepared students were. They came to the tutoring session ready to work: both with the right attitude and with the right resources. Thinking back on those days, I formed the following list of things that a writer can do to prepare for a trip to the Writing Center. I composed the list as if it were a student handout, essentially a list of things that students can do before they visit a tutor along with an explanation of why to do them. The list could easily be rewritten as a checklist of things for writers to do to prepare for a student-teacher conference or for discussion of a draft with a peer review or writing group.

1. [PLAN AHEAD] The very first thing that you need to do for your tutoring session is make an appointment early in the process (or drop-in the writing center early, if your school has drop-ins).

WHY? Tutoring sessions work best if they are far enough ahead of the paper's due date for you to think about the tutor's advice and let her suggestions affect the text. If you wait until the day that the paper is due, the ways that the tutor probably can help you are more limited because your time to reflect on the tutor's advice and make changes to the text is very limited. After all, it's just a matter of hours till the paper is due. Depending upon the kind of questions you have, you might take a draft to the Writing Center a week or more in advance. You might go even earlier, before you have a complete draft, if you need advice on focusing your paper. The rule of thumb is that the sooner you visit the writing center, the more time you'll have to take advantage of the tutor's comments.

2. [YOUR QUESTIONS] Before you meet with your tutor, re-read your paper. As you read, write question marks in the border or jot out questions in the margin anywhere you are unsure of the writing or have a question (whether it's a question about grammar issues or the content of the paper).

WHY? You're the best judge of your work. After all, you are closest to the writing task. If you can, put the paper away overnight before you re-read it so that you have a little more distance from the piece. Your goal is to try to read your paper as someone who hasn't seen it before. As you read your paper, you might ask questions such as the following: Does this example work? Do I need it to be more detailed? Should I use more examples here? Is this paragraph too long? Should I break it in half? Am I using the semicolon correctly here? Does this sentence make sense to you? It seems funny to me. With your questions worked out ahead of time, you'll be ready to go in the session. And that means that you'll be able to use your time more wisely -- you won't have to waste time figuring out what you want the tutor to help you with, so you'll be able to spend more time finding solutions (rather than trying to figure out what the questions are).

3. [REFLECTION] Once you've re-read everything you've written, spend a few minutes reflecting on the piece. Jot out answers to the following questions before your session:

a. What part of this draft is the strongest?

b. What part of this draft will you work on next?

c. Imagine at least 3 things that you might do to change this text: jot down what they are and why you're thinking of doing them. Begin your response with "What if" -- for example, What if I cut the second paragraph completely? I wonder if that would make the focus clearer.

WHY? Along with the questions that you've jotted down (#2), your reflection on what you've written will help your tutor know where to start. She'll know what you're thinking, which will help her focus her comments. You may not give your tutor your reflective notes, but once you've thought about them and written them down, it will be easier for you to share your ideas with your tutor in conversation. These notes are almost a rough draft for the beginning of your tutoring session. They should contain the major issues that the session will focus on. You can also ask the tutor to comment on your perceptions of the text -- does she agree that the strongest part of the draft is the same thing that you identified? If not, the two of you can talk about why your perceptions differ and how differences affect the session.

4. [RESOURCES] Get the mechanics together and carry them with you to the session: have the assignment, the book you're responding to, any outside resources, your grammar handbook, model essays, grading rubrics, previous drafts, notes, and so forth.

WHY? One of your tutor's first questions is going to be what are you working on. If you have the assignment that your teacher has given you, the tutor will know exactly. The other resources just help with the process. Your tutor may not use them, but if you have them, they can come in handy. For instance, if you have a question about whether you're paraphrasing correctly or relying too much on the original text, the tutor can look at the original and your version. If a grammar, punctuation, or mechanics question comes up, the tutor can point you directly to the relevant information in your book.

5. [SPECIFY] Be clear about what you can do on your own and what you need

help with -- If you have a chance to jot out questions in the margins of your text, point them out to the tutor. Likewise, if you have general questions or want the tutor to ignore something for now, speak up.

WHY? Again, you can use your time more wisely. If you know that you will look words up and spellcheck later, don't let your tutor waste time circling misspellings. Tell her up front not to worry about spelling in this draft. If your biggest question is about whether the paper fits the assignment, tell the tutor -- don't waste time talking about the details in paragraph four if you're not even sure that the paper has the right focus. If you're working on a research paper but haven't done any work on the bibliographic info other than noting the sources to yourself, tell the tutor not to worry about the citations because you'll fix them later. Don't let your session get derailed by focusing on a topic that you know you're going to work on later.

6. [TAKE NOTE!] Be sure to bring paper and something to write with.

WHY? Your tutor can make suggestions, but it's up to you to take the notes. Most tutors do not write on your papers. At most, they may underline a sentence, circle something, or make light marks beside a paragraph. You need to write down what the tutor says so that you have specific details to return to when you return to the paper. It's a whole lot easier to work from notes than to try to remember everything that your tutor said.

7. [TWO COPIES] If you can, bring two copies or your paper.

WHY? This process is such a simple thing to do, but it can really help make sure that you understand what your tutor is saying as well as take notes on things you want to reconsider. With two copies of your paper, you can follow along while your tutor works through your paper. You can take your own notes on the things that the tutor suggests right on your copy. The tutor may not do much writing on your paper, but you can make lots of revision notes very easily if you have your own copy.

[WORKING ON A COMPUTER: Some writing centers work with your paper on a computer rather than in print. Save your paper in a format that the tutor will be able to open (RTF usually works), and print a copy for yourself. You can take notes on the printed draft while the tutor works through the paper on screen.]

8. [CROSS-REFERENCING] Number the paragraphs in your paper so you can refer to the passages easily.

WHY? If you get lost, all you have to do is ask the tutor which paragraph she's referring to. Even if you can't bring an extra copy of your paper, numbering the paragraphs can be a big help. As your tutor is reading along, imagine she stops and says, "You could really use more details here." How will you know where "here" is after the session is over? Ask for the paragraph number. Then when you make a note, you can write, "Need more details in paragraph four." Much better. [If you're working more on sentence-level issues, you might insert line numbers using your word processor. Microsoft Word, for instance, can insert line numbers automatically.]

9.[FOCUS/DIRECTION] If you're still trying to decide what to write about or how to use the resources and ideas that you have, bring all the options with you, and do some pre-session thinking about the pros/cons of each. Likewise, if you're not sure what to do next in your paper, brainstorm on the options, and do pre-session thinking about the pros/cons of each. Use the tutoring session as a sounding board to get to your focus or choose the direction to take next.

WHY? If you are undecided about what to talk about next or which resource is the best, your tutor can suggest ways to evaluate your options and choose the best one. You have to do the groundwork though. Do some thinking of your own about what each option or resource has to offer as well as the things that are lacking. If you do some of the thinking before you get to the tutoring session, you can spend your time in the session talking about the choices rather than gathering the details you need to make a choice. Yet again, you can be sure that you use your time in the best possible way.

10. [SUMMARIZE AND REVIEW] At the end of the session, look back over your notes and create a series of action steps for yourself. Make a jot outline of the things that you need to do, based on the tutor's feedback.

WHY? This is your final chance to make sure that you have notes on all of the issues that the tutor has raised. You have a chance to make sure that you understand everything and that you have a clear direction on how to continue writing. If there are a number of items, you and the tutor might even prioritize them or structure them to help make the most of your time as you continue working on the piece. For instance, your tutor might suggest that you add more details before you worry about going through and checking for comma splices. Sure getting rid of comma splices is important; but once you add more details, you're going to have to go through the paper again, looking at the new text that you've added.

http://www.tengrrl.com/tens/

Appendix (K)

Books on writing and information gathering Writing Resources

The Blue Book of Grammar and Punctuation. Jane Straus' reference guide and workbook.

CCTC Guide to Grammar and Writing. By Charles Darling.

<u>Common Errors in English</u>. By Paul Brians. Simple, entertaining explanations of common errors in English.

Guide to Grammar and Style. By Jack Lynch.

MLA Guide for Writing Research Papers.

Punctuation Made Simple. By Gary A. Olson. Punctuation Made Simple.

Right Words newsletter articles. From Right Words New Zealand Limited.

Sharp Points. Bill Walsh's "vociferous rants" on matters of style.

<u>Silva Rhetoricae: The Forest of Rhetoric</u>. A guide to the terms of classical and renaissance rhetoric. By Dr. Gideon Burton of Brigham Young University.

Wired Style. Principles of English usage in the Digital Age.

Writer's Guide. The University of Victoria's Hypertext Writer's Guide.

Writing for the Web. By John Morkes and Jakob Nielsen. A research project about how

users read on the Web and how authors should write their Web pages.

Writing on the Internet. From WebReference.com.

Webster's new world dictionary and thesaurus. (1996). New York: Macmillan.

Writers Resources

<u>Reference/Style Guides</u>

Top / Arts / Writers Resources

Idea Fisher's Brainstorming Software

Software for Business and Creative Writers. General problem solving tools.

StoryCraft Writers' software

StoryCraft Writers Software (for either Windows or DOS) is a software program that guides writers through the entire process of writing a story using The Jarvis Method.

Garbl's Editorial Style Manual

This style guide can help answer your writing questions about abbreviations, capitalization, grammar, numbers, punctuation, spelling and word usage.

Top / <u>Reference</u> / Style Guides

MLA Style and Documentation

Guidelines and examples for current MLA procedures.

Guide to Citation Guides

An annotated collection of links to the best and most up-to-date citation guides that show how to properly cite resources from the Internet. Style guides for APA, MLA, Chicago, Turabian, BSE, styles and a description of how to cite references from Lexis/Nexis.

home / internet / writing

Writing on the Internet

Writing for the Internet takes a different approach than longer print-based articles and books. It involves a more abbreviated style, with grammar and punctuation being important for that professional look.

Web Reference Articles:

It's Grammar Stylin' Time Kids!

Meryl Evans continues her crusade to clean up the Web's writing with an essay on tricky

grammar gotchas like "which" vs. "that" and "effect" vs. "affect."

Writing Well for the Web

Quick and Easy Tips for Non-writers by Catherine Titta. Beginner's tips on writing style,

overcoming common mistakes and writing headlines.

I Say E-Mail, You Say Email

I say E-Mail, You Say Email.

The Judge Rules for "E-mail" with a Big "E"

Meryl Evans returns by popular demand with even more information on on-line grammar. Or is

that online?

Appendix	(L)
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Discussion Board	
Top of Form	
Third Essay INTRODUCTIONS!	
Post your introduction to your THIRD essay here, and offer SSUBS SUBTANTIVE feedbackDO IT!	[15 Messages] [All New]
Yusuf's Surveys!	
Often, taking surveys about what we do can give us insights about our work. With that in mind, have you learned anything about yourself as a writer while taking Yusuf's survey? Jot down some ideas here	[1 Message] [All read]
Your SECOND Essay	
Post a copy of your second essay here, and offer each other some feedback. Feedback should consist of questions that will lead the writer to consider how he or she could further develop his or her paper!	[64 Messages] [57 New]
Revising the FIRST essay	
Post some thoughts here about revising your first essay, after you have either taken it to the Writing Lab or attempted a revision	[7 Messages] [All New]
POSFavorite Quotationsand why?	
Post your favorite quotation from <i>Parable of the Sower</i> and tell us why you chose it. Respond to at least ONE other posting!	[23 Messages] [18 New]
POSchapters 1-5	
What are some of your thoughts about the first five chapters of <i>Parable of the Sower</i> ? Jot down some initial impressions here, and respond to one another. Also, if you have questions about the book, this is a good place to ask them!	[37 Messages] [28 km]
First Essay!	
Share some of your brainstorming for your first assignment here! Respond to each other with feedback!	[32 Messages] [15 New]
*** The researcher copied this page as is from the course home page.

Appendix (M)

Overall Statistics: Statistics Concepted on Friday Ma

Statistics Generated on Friday, March 15, 2002 8:40:02 AM (End of the Course)

Total Number of Accesses per Area

Number of Accesses over Time

User Accesses per Hour of the Day

User Accesses per Day of the Week

Total Accesses by User

Total Number of Accesses per Area

Area Name	Hits	Percent
Communication	3045	66.52%
Main Content Areas	1462	31.94%
Student Areas	70	1.52%
<mark>Total</mark>	<mark>4577</mark>	<mark>100%</mark>

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	C	Õ	G	Ū	
	А	Ν	R	D	Т
	Т	Т	0	Е	0
	Ι	Е	U	Ν	Т
	0	N	P	T	A
	Ν	Т	S	S	L
Student # 3	354	150	0	0	504
Student # 5	<mark>436</mark>	<mark>216</mark>	<mark>0</mark>	<mark>17</mark>	669
(The instructor)	7	102	0	0	109
Student # 8	<mark>148</mark>	<mark>62</mark>	<mark>0</mark>	2	212
Student # 9	<mark>311</mark>	<mark>120</mark>	<mark>0</mark>	1	432
Student # 1	198	74	0	1	273
Student # 4	67	30	0	3	100
Student # 7	332	202	0	22	556

Student # 2	200	80	0	0	280
Student # 6	<mark>411</mark>	<mark>168</mark>	<mark>0</mark>	<mark>21</mark>	290
Student # 10	243	64	0	0	307
Student # 11	<mark>66</mark>	<mark>24</mark>	<mark>0</mark>	<mark>0</mark>	90
TOTAL	<mark>3045</mark>	<mark>1462</mark>	<mark>0</mark>	<mark>70</mark>	4577

(3) User Accesses per Hour of the Day

Hour of The Day	Hit	S		Ре	ercer	nt														
0	21			0	.45%	ó														
1	0			0	%															
2	0			0	%															
3	2			0	.04%	ó														
4	0			0	%															
5	0			0	%															
6	0			0	%															
7	4			0	.08%	ó														
8	55			1	20%	ó														
9	28			0	.61%	ó														
10	55			1	20%	ó														
11	29)		0	.63%	ó														
12	79)		1	.72%	ó														
13	56)		1.	.22%	ó														
<mark>14</mark>	15	41		3	<mark>3.66</mark>	<mark>%</mark>														
<mark>15</mark>	22	18		4	8.45	<mark>%</mark>														
16	66)		1.	.44%	o														
17	62	,		1.	.35%	o														
18	96)		2	.09%	o														
19	74			1.	.61%	o														
20	41			0	.89%	o														
21	99)		2	16%	o														
22	33			0	.72%	ó														
23	18			0	.39%	ó														
Total	45	77		1	00%															
																				T
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Student #3	34	2	0	16	236	112	3	11	18	14	16	18	20	0	0	4	0	0	504	
Student #5	<mark>0</mark>	<mark>0</mark>	<mark>0</mark>	<mark>0</mark>	<mark>420</mark>	<mark>153</mark>	<mark>4</mark>	<mark>23</mark>	<mark>59</mark>	<mark>0</mark>	<mark>0</mark>	<mark>4</mark>	<mark>0</mark>	<mark>0</mark>	<mark>0</mark>	<mark>0</mark>	<mark>0</mark>	<mark>0</mark>	<mark>663</mark>	
(The Instructor)	13	8	2	6	7	23	16	0	2	0	8	14	0	0	0	0	4	6	109	
Student # 8	<mark>0</mark>	<mark>0</mark>	<mark>8</mark>	<mark>0</mark>	<mark>39</mark>	<mark>159</mark>	<mark>0</mark>	<mark>0</mark>	<mark>0</mark>	<mark>0</mark>	<mark>0</mark>	<mark>0</mark>	<mark>4</mark>	<mark>0</mark>	<mark>0</mark>	<mark>0</mark>	<mark>0</mark>	2	<mark>212</mark>	
Student #9	<mark>0</mark>	<mark>0</mark>	<mark>4</mark>	<mark>0</mark>	<mark>103</mark>	<mark>302</mark>	<mark>2</mark>	<mark>0</mark>	2	<mark>0</mark>	7	<mark>4</mark>	<mark>424</mark>							
Student # 1	0	0	0	0	61	192	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	18	0	0	0	0	273	
Student # 4	0	0	0	0	0	100	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	100	
Student #7	0	12	31	8	215	115	33	28	15	22	2	55	0	0	0	0	20	0	556	
Student # 2	2	0	8	4	98	151	8	0	0	9	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	280	
<mark>Student # 6</mark>	<mark>0</mark>	<mark>5</mark>	<mark>37</mark>	<mark>54</mark>	<mark>318</mark>	<mark>0</mark>	<mark>0</mark>	<mark>0</mark>	<mark>31</mark>	<mark>16</mark>	<mark>43</mark>	<mark>0</mark>	<mark>0</mark>	<mark>0</mark>	<mark>9</mark>	<mark>0</mark>	<mark>0</mark>	<mark>39</mark>	<mark>283</mark>	
Student #10	0	6	26	7	33	235	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	307	
Student #11	<mark>0</mark>	<mark>0</mark>	<mark>0</mark>	<mark>0</mark>	<mark>33</mark>	<mark>57</mark>	<mark>0</mark>	<mark>0</mark>	<mark>0</mark>	<mark>0</mark>	<mark>0</mark>	<mark>0</mark>	<mark>0</mark>	<mark>0</mark>	<mark>0</mark>	<mark>0</mark>	<mark>0</mark>	<mark>0</mark>	<mark>90</mark>	
TOTAL		<mark>55</mark>	<mark>29</mark>	<mark>79</mark>	<mark>56</mark>	<mark>1541</mark>	<mark>2218</mark>	<mark>66</mark>	<mark>62</mark>	<mark>96</mark>	<mark>74</mark>	<mark>41</mark>	<mark>99</mark>	<mark>33</mark>	<mark>18</mark>	2	<mark>4</mark>	<mark>55</mark>	<mark>28</mark>	<mark>4556</mark>

(4) User Accesses per Day of the Week

Day of The Week Sunday Monday Tuesday Wednesday	Hits 54 852 81 2374	Percent 1.17% 18.61% 1.76% 51.86%								
Friday	952	20.79%								
Saturday Total	119 4577	2.59% 100%								
			S	M	T	W	T	F	S	T O T A L
Student # 3			8	99	7	169	71	110	40	504
Student # 5			<mark>0</mark>	<mark>83</mark>	<mark>4</mark>	<mark>365</mark>	<mark>6</mark>	<mark>205</mark>	<mark>6</mark>	<mark>669</mark>
(The Instructor)			20	21	14	48	6	0	0	109
Student # 8			<mark>0</mark>	<mark>27</mark>	<mark>2</mark>	<mark>147</mark>	<mark>0</mark>	<mark>36</mark>	<mark>0</mark>	<mark>212</mark>
Student # 9			<mark>4</mark>	<mark>100</mark>	2	<mark>216</mark>	<mark>4</mark>	<mark>106</mark>	<mark>0</mark>	<mark>432</mark>
Student # 1			2	50	0	164	0	57	0	273
Student # 4			0	12	0	45	0	43	0	100
Student # 7			13	170	2	225	2	77	67	556
Student # 2			7	44	2	171	15	41	0	280
Student # 6			<mark>20</mark>	<mark>75</mark>	<mark>100</mark>	<mark>210</mark>	<mark>49</mark>	<mark>28</mark>	<mark>6</mark>	<mark>290</mark>
Student # 10			0	43	0	222	0	42	0	307
Student # 11			<mark>0</mark>	<mark>31</mark>	<mark>0</mark>	<mark>54</mark>	<mark>0</mark>	<mark>5</mark>	<mark>0</mark>	<mark>90</mark>

TOTAL

54 852 81 2374 145 952 119 4577

(5) Total Accesses by User

User	Hits	Percent
(Instructor)	109	2.38%
Student # 7	556	12.14%
Student # 3	504	11.01%
Student # 5	<mark>669</mark>	<mark>14.61%</mark>
Student # 9	<mark>432</mark>	<mark>9.43%</mark>
Student # 10	307	6.70%
Student # 8	<mark>212</mark>	<mark>4.63%</mark>
Student # 11	<mark>90</mark>	<mark>1.96%</mark>
Student # 1	273	5.96%
Student # 4	100	2.18%
Student # 6	<mark>290</mark>	<mark>6.33%</mark>
Student # 2	280	6.11%

Appendix (N)

(A) Editing Spelling:

Students do the following: (1) click on the right mouse button (2) review the menu of the possible correct spellings, and (3) click the correct spelling, and the spelling checker would replace the misspelled word with the correctly spelled word. Students who preferred to wait until they are done writing most probably start the spelling checker via the menu. The just do the following: (1) scroll to the top of the document, (2) use 'Save' to save their document, (3) click on the 'Tools' menu, (4) click on spelling, and the spelling checker would start searching the whole document, and (5) when it stops on a misspelled word, they scanned the suggestions box for the correct spelling of the word.

(B) Sorting out References:

If students cite references randomly, they could do the following to sort them alphabetically (1) highlight the list, (2) click on 'Tools', (3) Click on sort and review the dialogue box, and (4) click 'OK' to begin sorting.

(C) Formatting:

Formatting could be done as follows: (1) click on file menu, (2) Click on 'page setup', and (3) adjust settings in the dialogue box.