Designing an intensive EAP writing course for Vietnamese EFL students

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Abstract. Writing for academic purposes can be a challenging task for students who are learning English as a foreign language (EFL). This is because the skills involved in writing are highly complex on the one hand, and the students' first language (L1) styles for organizing academic writings are not always compatible to the English academic conventions, on the other. This paper reports a practical experience of developing an intensive academic writing course for a group of Vietnamese EFL learners who need to 'pass' the IELTS (International English Language Test System) for admission to an English-medium university program. The paper will firstly describe the course goals and objectives, based on which it will then discuss how the syllabus content was conceptualized and organized, and how methods of assessment and evaluation were identified.
Key words: English for Academic Purposes, academic writing, mix-ability classes, syllabus design, EFL learners, IELTS preparation.

1. Introduction

The writing course reported in this paper was part of a pre-university intensive language program in Hanoi, Vietnam. The aim of the program was to enhance the learners' general and academic English skills so that at the end of the program they would be able to participate successfully in an English-medium academic setting, either in Hanoi or in an English speaking country. The intensive English language program comprised three levels. General English (GE) training Level 1 (GE1)

was intended for pre-intermediate learners, GE Level 2 (GE2) for intermediate learners, and English for Academic Purposes (EAP) for upper-intermediate learners. The placement test helped to enroll learners in the course that was most suited to their proficiency levels. At the end of each GE course there was another test to screen the learners for the next level up. Each course lasted 3 months with approximately 360 hours of instruction. After EAP learners were required to sit the IELTS test for university entrance and they were expected to obtain an overall score of 6.0 for admission.

The 108 hour writing course, as part of the EAP course, was developed for students who completed two GE courses. Via this writing

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course, the students expected to, first and foremost, be introduced to the different writing types and tasks that they would encounter in an English-medium higher education setting. Another important reason for them to participate in the course was to be trained and prepared for the IELTS test that they would sit at the end of the course. In fact, it was the authors' observation after many years of EAP teaching on the program that students, by and large, even seemed to show more concern for the IELTS test than the development of their academic writing skills, because if they did not 'pass' the test, they would not be admitted for university study. The writing course, therefore, needed to strike a balance between the two components, namely, academic writing development and test preparation, both to give students the best kind of preparation for future university writing tasks and to meet their expectations about test performance. It was the authors' belief that providing IELTS training alone may not suffice to help students to cope with university writing (see Deakin, 1997) [1]. Therefore, although it was desirable to provide students with some specific preparation prior to taking IELTS so that students were familiarized with the test format and requirements, and their test anxiety was reduced (Brown 1987), IELTS teaching needed to be handled within the broader context of an EAP writing courses in order to give students an adequate preparation for university study (Deakin, 1997) [1].

Within the scope of this paper, the authors will present how they designed the writing course to respond to the students' above needs. They will describe the course goals and objectives, based on which they will discuss how the syllabus content was conceptualized and organized, and how methods of assessment and evaluation were identified. Before that,

however, it is essential to describe the IELTS writing subtest, its requirements and assessment criteria and conceptualize other types of academic writing for background understanding.

The IELTS writing consists of two tasks in which students are required to write for university lecturers as their intended audience. In task 1, students need to describe and interpret a chart, table or graph. To do this, they need to demonstrate skills of grouping, comparing and contrasting data to speculate or comment on the given chart, table or graph. Task 2 is an essay where students are required to present their opinions about a controversial issue using effective arguments and supporting evidence. In both tasks, students have to show an appropriate academic writing style. The two tasks are supposed to be completed in 60 minutes (IELTS Handbook 2007) [2]. As indicated in this document, the two tasks are assessed according to different criteria. Task 1 is assessed in terms of task achievement; cohesion and coherence; lexical resource; and grammatical range and accuracy. Task 2 is assessed in the aspects of task response; cohesion and coherence; lexical resource; and grammatical range and accuracy. In both tasks, the four criteria are equally weighted. Students also need to do well on both tasks to obtain a high overall score.

Academic writing in this paper is conceptualized as the kind of writing that students are required to do in college or university (Oshima & Hogue, 1991) [3]. Different forms of academic writing are descriptive, argumentative, and evaluative. The most common writing types at university are essays (e.g. research paper, discussion paper, essay exams), reports (e.g. scientific, technical, or business), and literature reviews. Academic

writing is concerned with a clear pattern and development, logical arguments and the use of evidence to support one's point of view (Hale, Taylor, Bridgeman, Carson, Kroll, and Kantor, 1997) [4]. These characteristics are attributed to its special audience, purpose and tone. The audience is academic staff, the purpose is to explain, persuade or convince the audience that one's point of view is plausible, and the tone is characterized by technical vocabulary and high levels of formality (Oshima & Hogue, 1991 [3], Davis & McKay, 1996 [5], Tribble, 1996 [6], Jordan, 1997) [7].

2. Literature Review

Writing is not only an important form of communication in day-to-day life but it is even more necessary for students who are preparing for their university study. This is because academic writing is one of the most important aspects of academic literacy that every scholar should possess in order to get socialized in their disciplinary communities (Flowerdew, 2000) [8]. However, writing for academic purposes is not an easy task for novice writers. For many second language (L2) writers, it can be an even more challenging task since it involves not only learning the new linguistic codes, conventions of genre and textual dimensions but also a great deal of cultural and experiential knowledge (Leki, 1996 [9], Hu, 2007) 10], and yet, many of these are almost all implicit (Casanava, 2002) [11]. Researchers even compare this with learning a third language (Sorter, 1985) [12]. Therefore, course designers need to anticipate all the challenges the students may be encountered with while taking the course so that sound pedagogical interventions to help students to cope with those challenges can be decided.

Hutchinson and Waters (1987: 65) [13] define a course as "an integrated series of teaching-learning experiences, whose ultimate aim is to lead the learners to a particular state of knowledge." Course development includes planning a course, teaching it, and modifying the plan, both while the course is in progress and after the course is over (Graves, 1996) [14]. The traditional view of course development is often referred to as the specialist approach. In this approach, what is to be taught, what instructional methods and materials to be used and how students are assessed are all determined by the specialists (Johnson, 1989) [15]. Recently this approach has been criticized for it does not involve teachers in the whole process of course development. Teachers are merely implementers or consumers of the course designed by experts. Thus, there is always a gap between the intended course and the actual implementation of the course in the classroom (e.g. Goff, 1998 [16]; Johnson, 1989 [15]; Markee, 1997) [17]. As Widdowson (2004: 369) [18] puts it, "[t]he usual way of looking at this disparity in the past has been to see actual practice as a constraint on the effective implementation of the proposals of expert opinion which needs to be overcome." As a result, educational authorities blame teachers for resisting curricular innovation and teachers complain that course designers are out of touch with the reality of the classroom (Graves, 2008) [19].

A remedy to the mismatches between course designers and course implementers is to encourage teachers to take the role both as the course developers and course implementers. This helps to develop teachers professionally. Graves (1996: 6) [14] points out,

Valuable though the knowledge of experts may be, teachers themselves are experts in their settings, and their past experience and successes can serve as bridges to new situations. Correspondingly, the experience of developing a course enables teachers to make sense of the theories and expertise of others because it gives them opportunities to clarify their understanding of theory and make it concrete.

The processes we followed in designing this academic writing course include (i) determining objectives through students' needs analysis; (ii) conceptualizing the course content; (iii) selecting materials and activities; (iv) grading tasks;(v) determining teaching methodology; and (vi) determining assessment methods. These processes will be presented in detail in the following sections.

3. Determining the course goals and objectives

3.1 Background information on the learners

The EAP writing course lasted approximately 12 weeks and was of 108 hours duration. Since there was usually no prior contact with the prospective learners, the course was designed based chiefly on the authors' own experience with EAP courses and the available information about the prospective learners.

The participants of the course would be young school leavers who wished to undertake university study in an English-medium setting. After many years working on the program, the authors learned that although EAP learners were enrolled in the upper-intermediate level, their true proficiency levels might vary between intermediate and upper-intermediate. The learners might also vary in the number of years

they had spent learning English and in their future fields of study. The writing course, like any other components of the EAP course, therefore, needed to cater to these individual differences.

3.2 Students' needs analysis

The assessment of students' needs is crucial because students will learn best only when the learning is relevant to their own needs. Needs can be conceptualized as either "objective" (concerning language proficiency and language use) or "subjective" (affective and cognitive) needs (Brindley, 1989a [20], Graves, 1996) [14]. In the assessment of students' objective needs, it was decided that firstly, since students came to this course with the expectations of being prepared for the IELTS writing, their expectations needed to be met. Besides, as discussed earlier, in order to help students function successfully in English-medium academic settings, there needed to be a combination of both IELTS and academic preparation in this course. In the earlier writing courses (i.e. GE 1 and GE 2), students were taught mainly functional and expressive writing and only the very basics of academic writing, such as writing a short expository essay. This course, therefore, needed to give them more chance to be engaged in a wider variety of authentic university-level writing tasks. Since the students coming to this course might major in different fields of study, it would have been desirable to have various discipline-specific writing courses to cater to their different future writing needs due to the different writing requirements of different disciplines (see Reid, 2001[21], Flowerdew & Peacock, 2001[22] , Hu, 2007) [10]. However, this seemed infeasible due to a number of constraints, including the small number of teaching staff, insufficient space and resources. Yet, it was

believed that by exposing students to a wide variety of academic writing types and tasks across various disciplines, and drawing their attention to the most fundamental characteristics that are shared by academic writing in all disciplines (see Hu, 2007) [10], the course would be able to offer adequate training for its students.

What is more, students also needed to be taught how to plan, monitor and evaluate their own writing and learning so that they could effectively prepare themselves for the test and cope with future study. The main reason for this is that learners who depend heavily on teachers and do not develop their own learning strategies are less likely to progress. Also, studies into learning strategies reveal that strategy training in academic language teaching leads to improvements in students' performance (O'Malley, Chamot, Stewner-Manzanares, Russo and Kupper, 1985) [23]. Another reason lies in the time constraints of the course. 108 hours in class was certainly insufficient to master the huge amount of knowledge that this course offers; therefore, students needed to continue learning English autonomously outside the classroom.

As regards students' subjective needs, since the learners in this course came straight from high school, they lacked experience in university settings. They might therefore find it a highly challenging experience when moving to a student-centered learning pedagogy where they had to take charge of their own learning and thus, needed to be made aware of their new roles and expectations and be guided and socialized into this new learning experience. However, in the absence of students it was hard to identify all their actual needs. As a consequence, this need analysis was supposed to be an on-going process, which was continuously conducted as the course progressed.

3.3 The course goals and objectives

According to Graves (1996) [14], determining the course goals is to seek the answers to the question "What are the purpose and intended outcomes of the course?" Based on the assessment of both objective and subjective needs above, two main goals were worked out for this course. The first goal was to develop students' academic writing skills, including IELTS writing skills (i.e. *academic writing skill development*). It was anticipated that after this course students would have confidence in taking the IELTS test and master academic writing skills to deal with university writing tasks more effectively. Secondly, since students needed to develop learning autonomy, as stated previously, for effective learning in the restricted time frame of this course and for their future university studies, the second goal of this course was to enable students to become autonomous learners in the academic context (i.e. *learning strategies development*).

Determining the course objectives is also to answer the question: "How will my students achieve these goals?" (Graves, 1996) [14]. Raimes (1983) [24] assumes that writing is a set of decision-making processes involving intricate choices of grammar, syntax, mechanics, organization, word choice, purpose, audience, content and the writing procedure. Teaching writing, therefore, needs to cover both "what", i.e. linguistic codes, conventions of genre, textual dimensions, cultural and experiential knowledge and "how", i.e. the writing procedures (Bachrudin &Nuril, 1994) [25] . In this syllabus, hence, students needed to develop the knowledge of linguistic, stylistic, and rhetorical features that are characteristic of

Western academic writing and essential writing strategies, then to transfer the learnt knowledge and skills to their actual academic and IELTS writing.

According to Wyat-Brown (1988) [26] and Jordan (1997) [27], what causes L2 writers most problems is not linguistic knowledge but the cultural assumptions and stylistic/rhetorical conventions underlying academic writing tasks. Bachrudin and Nuril (1994) [25] also note that L2 learners spend little time analyzing questions, planning and reviewing what they have written. Therefore, in this syllabus, a great emphasis was given to the development of stylistic/ rhetorical knowledge and the development of writing strategies besides the focus on the linguistic codes. Besides, students also needed to be aware of the behaviors that are valued in the Western academic writing such as documenting sources and avoiding plagiarism, which they may have not been taught before participating in this academic setting (see Currie, 1998) [28]. Furthermore, to "pass" the IELTS writing test and to cope successfully with future university exams, students needed practice and test-taking strategies.

Concerning the second goal, which was to develop learning autonomy, students needed to be taught self-directed learning skills such as how to plan and monitor their own writing and learning, how to understand their own learning styles and use learning strategies appropriate for their styles and other useful strategies, how to take risk and learn from mistakes, and how to manage the physical environment in which they were working (Vale, Scarino, &McKay, 1991) [29]. Appendix 1 presents more details about the goals, general objectives and specific objectives that have been identified.

4. Conceptualizing the syllabus content

The content of this course was conceptualized as a genre-structured and task-based syllabus. It was anticipated that through actively participating in learning tasks that drew students' attentions on meaning rather than form, students would have a great deal of chance to comprehend, manipulate, produce and interact in English (Nunan, 1989) [30]. It was also anticipated that by using tasks as a design unit, teachers could invite students' involvement in designing and selecting tasks that were appropriate for their own needs, thus encouraging them to plan and monitor their own learning (Nunan, 1989) [30], which was one of the goal of this course. This also helped to inform essential modifications to the syllabus so as to respond to students' actual needs when they became more apparent as the course went on.

The components of a task, according to Nunan (1989) [30] include goals, i.e. the aims for the task, input, activities which specify what learners will do with the input, teacher and learner roles in carrying out learning tasks and the setting where the tasks are carried out. In this syllabus, the goals of the tasks were the course specific objectives. This helped to guarantee that the tasks selected aimed at achieving the goals determined for this course.

5. Selecting materials and activities

Since this course aimed to prepare a heterogeneous group of students in a wide range of writing and learning skills for university study, it was assumed that no single course book would be able to cover all what the course was determined to offer and no common course book would be appropriate for all

learners. Therefore, the materials exploited as input in this syllabus were selected from a variety of sources according to their effectiveness in achieving the purposes of the course, their appropriateness for the students and teachers, their relevance and practicalities (Graves, 1996 [14]; Scarino, Vale, McKay, & Clark, 1988) [31] .

The activities in this syllabus were selected according to their appropriateness for the goals of the tasks, the input data (materials), the learners' language proficiency levels, needs and learners' different learning styles (Nunan, 1989) [30]. The activities also aimed to promote the purposeful and meaningful use of language in classrooms in order to help students achieve the general objectives of the course (Scarino et al, 1988). Based on the suggestions by Vale et al. (1991) [29] and Clark in Nunan (1989) [30], the following activity types were considered appropriate in this syllabus. Firstly, to develop students' writing skills, various writing activities involving both process (e.g. drafting/ redrafting) and product (e.g. searching for linguistic, stylistic and rhetorical features characteristic of different genres, processing and using them in parallel exercises) writing techniques were helpful. Others such as personalized activities (e.g. writing journals/ diaries) that allowed for fluency practice or activities involving processing information from various sources (e.g. writing reports, surveys, reviews) were also used. Students also needed activities that promoted speed writing in a certain time limit to be prepared for IELTS writing and other writing tasks on university exams in the future. The activities selected for this course could be done individually, in pairs or in groups. It was supposed that through these activities students would learn not only what to write but also how to write, as well as how to

control and evaluate what they have written, which is crucial for effective writing.

To develop students' learning strategies, activities such as problem-solving, exchanging information, opinions and ideas also helped. These activities encouraged students to reflect on their own learning, share experiences with peers to learn useful strategies from each other, and discuss the most appropriate learning strategies for themselves. Appendix 2, due to the limited space, presents a sample of possible input data and activities that were employed for this course. However, it should be noted that in the absence of students, this was not considered as a fixed decision. Rather, when students arrived, essential adaptations and elaboration of these suggestions would be made.

6. Grading tasks

Grading a syllabus should consider both factors relating to activities and factors relating to the learners (Vale et al., 1991) [29]. The following suggestions by these authors were considered in the decision-making process, but a fixed syllabus sequence would be made only after consultation with students when they arrived.

6.1 Factors relating to activities:

a) The activities that are not socio-culturally specific should come before those that are. In the case of this syllabus, for example, learners would find the writing tasks that require underlying cultural assumptions such as argumentation, hedging or commitment more difficult to understand and apply than those do not such as description and recounting.

b) The activities that are less cognitively demanding should come first. According to

Dubin in Vale et al. (1991: 29) [29], the levels of cognitive demand of activities can be assessed according to the following scales:

Memory: recalling or recognizing information (e.g. in this syllabus, they are activities requiring students to recognize and identify features characteristic of different genres and answer teachers' questions about these features).

Translation: transfer of information (e.g. students read a writing model to understand the way it is structured and transfer this information into charts).

Interpretation: discovering relationships among facts, generalizations, definitions, values, and skills (e.g. distinguishing main ideas from supporting ideas, discovering biased and over-generalized statements through the use of vocabulary and metaphor).

Application: solving a life-like problem that requires the identification of the issues and the selection and use of appropriate generalizations and skills (e.g. students discuss to find out useful strategies in specific learning tasks).

Analysis: solving a problem in the light of conscious knowledge of the parts and forms of thinking (e.g. in teaching how to write topic sentence, teachers can separate topic sentences from supporting ideas in a number of paragraphs and give them to students to match).

Synthesis: solving a problem that requires original, creative thinking (e.g. students work in groups to do a small survey or project and write the report of it).

Evaluation: judging good or bad, right or wrong, valuable or useless, according to standards identified by learners in consultation with their teachers (writing critical review of academic texts on the common issues, or

evaluate their own writing and learning skills under the guidance of teachers)

6.2 Factors relating to learners:

Learner factors include learners' prior learning experience (e.g. activities that are experientially known to learner should precede those that experientially new), and learners' abilities assessed by teachers through observation. Appendix 3 presents a sample of the possible sequence of this syllabus, but adaptations might be necessary when implementing the course to fit in with learners' actual characteristics as these became clearer.

7. Teaching methodology

There are two common approaches to teaching academic writing: the process and the product approaches. While the first focuses on teaching students the writing procedures, the latter aims to provide them with sufficient language elements for writing (Jordan 1997). As stated earlier, teaching writing should cover both "product" and "process". This is because although writing for assessment (like in IELTS and university writing) is very product-oriented (it is the final product of students' performance that is assessed in exams), only a good process can allow for a good product to be obtained. This course will therefore combine both approaches, with a slightly greater emphasis placed on the process approach at the beginning of the course, given the learners' lack of knowledge of and experience with the process of writing.

In this syllabus, based on the principles of a learner-centered learning system suggested by Vale et al. (1991) [29], learner and teacher roles were defined as follows:

Learner role:

Learners take main responsibility for their own learning and progress.

Learners are personally committed to all writing tasks.

Learners discuss their areas of problems with teachers and seek help from teachers when necessary.

Learners are involved (cooperate and negotiate with teachers) in the selection of materials and activities.

Learners express their expectations of how to learn so that teachers can tailor their teaching methods accordingly.

Teacher role:

Teachers in the learner-centered learning and teaching system play the role of instructors, facilitators and counselors.

Teachers create a learning environment where students are encouraged to actively participate and take risk.

Teachers bridge the gap in students' knowledge.

Teachers helpfully assist students in developing their academic writing skills and self-directed learning skills as well as test-taking strategies.

Teachers are sensitive and respond to learners' needs and expectations of how to learn.

Teachers regularly assess students' progress and support them with useful feedback that encourages them to consciously identify and solve their writing problems. Teachers also stimulate practice and encourage students to transfer the learnt skills to the new tasks.

Teachers understand students' learning difficulties and support them with valuable advice.

An important characteristic of the students who undertook this course was their varying English proficiencies. As a consequence, a particular classroom writing task which might be motivating and manageable to some students can turn out to be really daunting to others. Therefore, it was crucial to create a methodological approach so as neither to leave the struggling students behind nor to fail to engage advanced students (Le Van Canh & Nguyen Thi Thuy Minh, 2010) [32]. In seeking such an instructional approach, a socio-cultural approach was considered. This approach views language learning as a socially constructed process where collective scaffolding through peer-to-peer and teacher-to-student collaboration can help students complete writing tasks which are a little bit beyond their current competence (Hannafin, Land, & Oliver, 1999 [33]; Vygostky, 1978) [34]. In the academic writing course reported here, two types of scaffolds were employed, i. e. teacher-assisted writing and peer-assisted writing. The former included step-by-step instruction, modeling, language focus exercises, teacher-student joint-construction, teacher-student conferencing, and teacher written feedback while the latter consisted of peer writing and peer conferencing. The students seemed to respond well to this instructional approach as evidenced by their higher level of motivation and confidence in learning how to write.

8. Methods of assessment

Assessment in this syllabus refers to the estimate of students' performance and achievement of the course objectives and

evaluation deals with making judgments about the course effectiveness (Brindley, 1989b [35] , Vale et al., 1991 [29], Weir and Roberts, 1994) [36].

Students' achievement in this syllabus was supposed to be assessed at three levels. Level 1 referred to the overall proficiency that they gained as a result of the whole course, while level 2 concerned the degree of proficiency which students achieved towards the objectives of the course. Level 3, on the other hand, involved students' mastery of structural features underlying the skills which were identified as the objectives of a particular unit of instruction (Brindley, 1989b) [35].

The assessment of these three levels served different purposes. Level 1 was assessed at the end of the course to communicate the results to relevant people such as students' parents and the course administrators. In the mean time, level 2 was assessed both formatively and summatively to monitor the teaching and learning process so that teachers could make essential modifications and raise students' self-awareness about their strengths and weaknesses. Level 3 was assessed continuously to diagnose students' learning difficulties, watch students' progress and raise their levels of confidence. In these ways, the assessment of students' achievement is seen as an integral part of teaching and a continuous process, which creates informed repairs for teaching. In order to obtain reliable assessment results and a comprehensive picture of learners' true language abilities in natural and authentic contexts of language use, Shohamy (1998) [37] suggests that teachers use multiple sources. In this course, different methods for assessment were conducted, following Vale et al. (1991) [29], Brindley (1989b) [35] and Shohamy (1998) [37].

Firstly, tests were used as a means to assess students' progress (level 2) and report students' overall gains after the course (level 1). For example, at the end of the course, students were required to sit for an IELTS writing subtest under the same time and administration conditions as the real IELTS. The results showed how proficient in academic writing skills students became after the course . Mock IELTS writing every two weeks also revealed students' progress towards the objectives of the course. Students' performance in these mock tests were analyzed in order to decide what changes in terms of content, tasks and methodology to be made to enable the students to climb up the higher step of the writing proficiency scale.

To assess level 2 achievement, students were asked to compile portfolios of written work in which they collected all their assignments for assessment. Students were also encouraged to assess their own writing based on the criteria given to them. This method helped to urge students to take responsibility of their own learning and allow teachers to look at students' learning process from different perspectives and hence respond to their needs better. Peer assessment was another way to keep track of students' progress and diagnose areas of difficulty. With the aid of teachers' guidance and explicit, workable assessment criteria sheets, students were encouraged to work in pairs or groups and provide feedback on each other's writing or learning strategies. Peer assessment developed students' interactive learning strategies, which were very useful for their future university studies. To assess level 3 achievement, students' performance in class learning activities was observed, followed by teachers' feedback and assistance.

The evaluation process aims to systematically gather and analyze essential information for the purposes of estimating and increasing the effectiveness and efficiency of a particular program (Weir and Roberts, 1994) [36]. It can be done both summatively and formatively. In this course, the continuous evaluation process was based on the teachers' assessment of students' progress. Summative evaluation, on the other hand, could be conducted through questionnaires as a self-report method. The use of questionnaires seemed appropriate in this course as they are cost efficient, easy to respond and analyze and do not seem to be affected by factors such as the rapport between the respondents and evaluators.

Conclusion

In this paper, the authors have presented how they designed an intensive academic writing course for Vietnamese students who wish to undertake their university studies in an English-medium higher education setting. The design of this course covers determining the course goals and objectives, conceptualizing and organizing the syllabus content, and finally identifying effective methods of assessment and evaluation. However, since this course was for a specific group of students, it may not be usable to other groups of students. Our purpose in this paper is to report our approach to course design so that colleagues who are interested in this professional area can use as a reference. It is necessary to cite Graves that

Successful course design depends on the teacher's making sense of what she is doing, not just doing it. Gaining access to one's expertise and that of others depends on a teacher's ability to make sense of her experience through reflection and understanding, to make a bridge between practice and thought so that one can influence the other. (Graves, 1996: 6) [14].

In this sense, a process-based approach to course design is more likely to bring about the desired outcomes than a product-based approach. We believe that even after the course has been designed, alterations are needed when the students arrive to fit in with their actual characteristics, learning styles, needs and expectations.

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SPECIFIC GOALS	**GENERAL OBJECTIVES**	**SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES**
To develop students' academic writing skills, especially IELTS writing skills	By the end of the course students will be able to: - describe charts, graphs or tables using appropriate linguistic devices, stylistic and rhetorical devices and useful writing strategies	*By the end of the course students will be aware of and/ or able to use:* • descriptive and speculative vocabulary and structure (e.g. simple present tense, simple future tense, language of uncertainty (modality) adverbial phrases, relative clauses, transition markers, etc) • compare/contrast, generalisation, classification, coherence/cohesion, speculation • *analysing data, grouping and labeling data, hypothesising, speculating and generalising from specific data*

Appendix 1: matrix of objectives for an ielts preparation course

Learning objectives	*Activities*	*Input*	*Learner role*	*Teacher role*	*Setting*
To develop students' skills in chart/graph description tasks	* Identifying and deliberately focusing on language features of descriptive genres from a model text * Identifying and practising effective ways of interpreting, grouping, labelling and speculating data	*Model texts *IELTS Task 1 practice materials or any appropriate chart, graph and table.	*Personally committed to the writing task and actively participate in pair (group) work	*Guide, monitor and facilitator	*Classroom/ individual and pair work

Appendix 2: sampled matrix of activities and techniques for an ielts preparation class

Week 1-2	Academic and IELTS writing development:	Fuction: Describing chart/s graphs Task: • Identifying language features of descriptive genres • Paragraph construction • Introduction to IELTS Writing task 1 • Mock IELTS writing test
	Learning strategies development:	Goal: Planning and monitoring one's own learning Task: • Discussion of the expectations of learning and learner behaviours in Australian universities • Constructing an independent learning timetable • Organising vocabulary book • Introduction to learning journal

Appendix 3: sample of grading tasks for an ielts writing preparation course

Thiết kế khóa học cấp tốc rèn kỹ năng viết tiếng Anh học thuật cho sinh viên Việt Nam

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Viết thể loại học thuật có lẽ là một thách thức lớn đối với những người học tiếng Anh như một ngoại ngữ. Lý do là kỹ năng viết là một kỹ năng phức tạp trong khi đó những yêu cầu về văn phong của thể loại viết học thuật trong tiếng mẹ đẻ không phải lúc nào cũng tương tự như trong tiếng Anh. Bài viết này trình bày kinh nghiệm thực tế trong việc thiết kế chương trình cho một khóa học viết học thuật cho một nhóm học sinh Việt Nam có nhu cầu luyện kỹ năng viết để đạt điểm chuẩn trong bài thi IELTS để được nhận vào học ở các trường đại học của các nước nói tiếng Anh.

Bài viết bắt đầu bằng những thông tin miêu tả về mục đích và mục tiêu của khóa học. Tiếp theo đó các tác giả trình bày cách tổ chức nội dung của chương trình cũng như phương pháp kiểm tra học sinh và đánh giá khóa học.

Từ khóa: Tiếng Anh học thuật, viết thể loại học thuật, lớp học có trình độ khác nhau, thiết kế chương trình, học sinh học tiếng Anh như một ngoại ngữ, luyện thi IELTS.