

The Journal of Language Teaching and Learning, 2012 2(1), 45-58

Tracing the Benefits of Self Annotation in Genre-based Writing

Demet Yaylı*

Abstract

Self-annotation writing is an important tool as it plays the dual roles of encouraging the students to act as reviewers of their own texts and of providing their instructor with a means of better understanding their descriptions and explanations for the design of their texts. However, although annotation writing has appeared in the literature as a pedagogical tool, the studies systematically examining learners' self annotation writing practices are scant. This study, therefore, aims to gain insights into the benefits of self-annotation writing embedded in genre-based writing activities of a group of EFL learners. The participants' literacy narratives, self annotation excerpts and their post-instruction views on self-annotation writing were qualitatively analyzed. The findings indicated several benefits of annotation writing, corroborating some previous studies. It is suggested that training learners to articulate their intentions in annotations should be prioritized so that self annotation might work properly as a tool for awareness-raising and learner autonomy.

Keywords: Self annotation, genre-based writing, self assessment, authorial maturity, student-teacher communication

© Association of Gazi Foreign Language Teaching. All rights reserved

1. Background

1.1. Annotation in writing instruction

An annotation is a concise description of a particular work. In essence, annotations are of two types; descriptive and evaluative (Beck, 1982). In descriptive annotations, learners identify exactly what they think they do in their writing. In evaluative annotations, however, learners reflect on both the positive and negative sides of their texts and also the remaining problems. When used as a tool of assessment in writing instruction, an annotation provides information on a learner's language ability or achievement (Hyland, 2003b). As suggested in the literature, the student's self monitoring increases autonomy in the learning of writing by giving learners' control over their own writing (Cresswell, 2000). Cheng (2006) describes language awareness as an approach that is based on learners' paying conscious attention to instances of language so that they can discover and articulate patterns of language use. One possible way of building language awareness in writing is annotation writing through which students achieve enhanced consciousness of the forms and the functions of the language and the awareness of the limitations of the type of writing they are engaged with.

* Pamukkale University, Denizli, Turkey demety@pau.edu.tr

Using annotated samples of learner-produced texts as a self-assessment tool in a different English as a Foreign Language (hereafter, EFL) context, Brown (2005) encouraged the participants to compare their work with that of others “to allow them to develop a sense of the quality of their own work in relation to that of others and the expected standards” (p. 179). The results revealed that reviewing the annotated samples enabled most participants to evaluate the quality of their writing reliably.

There are some other studies in which students were invited to comment on their work. In an earlier study with a focus on self-annotation writing, Beck (1982) integrated the practice of annotation writing into his freshmen (regular and remedial) and sophomore advanced composition courses and observed three benefits of it (i.e., authorial maturity, enhancing effectiveness of teaching and helping student-teacher communication). The reason for including self-annotation writing in these courses was to seek gradual improvement of students’ writing performance which also included developing an awareness of their own abilities. In another study, Charles (1990) used student self-monitoring technique as an open-ended scheme in which students were asked to make comments on any aspect of their writing. The teacher responded to these comments by giving direct and appropriate feedback. This technique indicated several advantages such as facilitating the teacher’s understanding of students’ problems and intentions, providing students with more control over the feedback they received, and allowing student-teacher dialogue over texts. In a further study drawing on Charles’ (1990) student self-monitoring technique, Storch and Tapper (1996) asked students to identify their concerns by means of marginal or end-notes addressing to their teacher. The analysis was based on form, content, and student views on the use of this annotation scheme. The results indicated that students annotated mainly for syntax and lexis in the form of confirmation questions. Also some distinctive patterns of annotation were observed to be related to L2 proficiency of the students. In a further study, Storch and Tapper (1997) investigated the perceptions of both native speaker (NS) and nonnative speaker (NNS) student writers about their own writing to find that 80% of the both NS and NNS students commented favorably about making self annotations. In his study, Creswell (2000) applied a three-stage program (i.e., raising awareness of process and product, demonstrating annotations and evaluating annotations) in which the participants were engaged in writing self-monitored annotations. As a result, this program was found to be effective in developing responsible self-monitoring.

1.2. Genre-based writing instruction

The brief historical survey of approaches to second language (L2) writing identifies four main approaches focusing on the linguistic form of the text itself, the writer and the cognitive processes, the content for writing, and finally the demands made by the reader, respectively (Raimes, 1991). When the audiolingual method was dominant in language instruction, L2 writing activities were limited to fill-in drills, transformations, sentence combining and controlled compositions. In the 1970s, however, researchers reacted against the form-focused approach and developed an interest in what writers do when they write. Due to the power of psycholinguistic and cognitive theories dominating language instruction in 1970s and 1980s, cognition was viewed as the central element of process writing which was believed to develop through individual processes of recursive and interactive stages such as planning, drafting, revising, and editing (Hyland, 2003b). When this approach started to be seen insufficient for academic demands, the focus shifted from the writing processes of the writer to the content and demands of the genres and academy (Raimes, 1991).

Content-based writing, on the other hand, relies heavily on reading; thus, students are provided with skills to read texts efficiently as a basis for producing their own texts (Hyland, 2003b). Simultaneously with content-based writing, another academically-oriented approach, reader-based (also called genre-based) writing emerged. Genre-based pedagogies are based on the idea that writers are always influenced by the social activity they are involved in, by their relationship with their readers, and also by the development of their interaction with their readers (Hyland, 2004, 2005). Teachers who follow genre-based pedagogies in their writing classes “look beyond subject content,

composing processes and textual forms to see writing as attempts to communicate with readers" (Hyland, 2003b, p. 18). Thus, genre approaches to language teaching have become the most fruitful response to process approaches, which failed to consider the forces outside the individual writer (Hyland, 2003a; Raimes, 1991). Genre-based pedagogies address the limitations observed in the process approaches by "offering students explicit and systematic explanations of the ways language functions in social contexts" (Hyland, 2003a, p. 18). Put simply, the efforts are made to answer the questions why a particular use of language takes the shape it does or why we use the language the way we do and what makes it possible (Bhatia, 2002). The burgeoning concern with context, language analysis, description and interpretation are at the heart of genre-based writing instruction (Belcher, 2004; Cheng, 2006; Johns, 1997).

The term genre is commonly used in film, music, literature as well as language teaching and learning activities in the contexts of English for Specific Purposes (hereafter, ESP) and English for Academic Purposes (hereafter, EAP). Genres are defined as abstract, goal-oriented, staged and socially recognized ways of using language for particular purposes (Berkenkotter & Huckin, 1995; Halliday, 1994; Hyland, 2003a, 2003b, 2004, 2007; Paltridge, 2001; Swales, 1990, 2004). Genres help us to understand "the ways individuals use language to engage in particular communicative situations" (Hyland, 2004, p. 7) and some examples for written genres could be listed as sales letter, recipe, tourism brochure, film review, biography, telegram, manual, will, novel, essay, dissertation and research article (Cook, 1989).

Some ESP genre-based studies have involved a meticulous analysis of student writing in certain genres. Henry and Roseberry (1998), for instance, explored how a group of undergraduate students improved their ability to produce effective tokens of the genre of tourism brochure through genre-based writing instruction in an EAP context. Pang (2000), on the other hand, explored the impact of genre-based writing activities on undergraduate students' writing of film reviews. In another study, Swales and Lindemann (2002) explored how L2 graduate students incorporated nine abstracts into the literature review section of a dissertation proposal written in the field of engineering education. In a study closer to the scope of the present study, Cheng (2007) analyzed three article introductions in three different rhetorical contexts, literacy narrative and interview transcripts of a graduate student in the field of electrical engineering to observe how this learner recontextualized his genre awareness in his writing.

While all these studies included analyses of student writing in a single genre, in another study conducted in an EFL context where learners learn English in a non-English-speaking environment, Yayli (2011) analyzed a group of EFL learners' annotations and interview transcripts while they were engaged in practicing different genres. The analysis indicated some instances of cross-genre awareness. In other words, some of the participants were able to recontextualize an awareness of rhetorical and textual considerations of one genre while writing a text belonging to another genre (i.e., some participants stated that they conveyed some features of formal e-mail to their letters of complaint, for instance).

1.3. Integrating annotation-writing with genre-based instruction

Due to the scant attention paid to capture how learners develop as writers of genres in genre-based writing pedagogy (Cheng, 2006), a potentially productive research direction is to address some attention to how learners analyze and describe their writing of genres in genre-based framework of writing instruction. As depicted by Cheng (2006), a typical ESP writing class for international graduate students assists students in their attempts to explore the generic features in the research articles (RAs) within their disciplinary fields. This brings up discipline-specific writing tasks, and learners annotate published RAs as well as their own texts from a genre-analytic perspective. Annotation writing as well as self annotation is therefore seen as an enabling cultural tool that students need to develop in genre-based writing class. "However, there have been few studies that systematically examine learners' actual development or their use of this tool. A study that focuses on

learners' genre-related annotations of published RAs, and more important, their self annotations of their academic writing, therefore, can provide a useful glimpse into the emergence of genre awareness and the development of discipline-specific literacy" (Cheng, 2006, p. 85).

Drawing on this call for research examining students' self annotations of their writing, this EAP genre-based research study aimed to gain insights into the traceable benefits of self-annotation writing. The qualitative data in this study were gathered from the participants' self annotation excerpts and their reported views. I collected a group of EFL learners' literacy narratives as pre-instruction data and their views on self annotation writing as post-instruction data. The analysis of the participants' self annotations, their pre- and post-instruction views aimed to trace to what extent the benefits of self annotation writing was observable. To get a vivid picture of the benefits of self annotation writing, the following research question was asked:

To what extent are the benefits of self annotation writing traceable in the annotations and views of the participants?

2. Method

2.1. Participants

The convenience sampling method was used for the choice of this group, and I was the instructor assisting these students in their genre-based writing experiences. The repeatedly highlighted need for more attention to the exploration of the intricacies of being a learner in genre-based writing classroom and of the pedagogical realities of ESP genre-based writing classroom (Cheng, 2006) served as a motive for inquiry in this learner- and learning-focused EAP genre-based research study. The participants were seven first-year students enrolled in an English Language Teaching (ELT) program in a state university in Turkey. These were the volunteering students among 27 first-year students who agreed to share their views and annotation excerpts for research purposes. Like all of their classmates, before being enrolled to this program, they had already completed their primary and secondary education and passed the university entrance exam. They had also studied in a university English preparatory class which consisted of 22 hours of English per week. The instruction they received focused on improving their four skills and grammar before these students started their first-year education in the ELT program. Thus, they could be considered to be advanced-level learners who had fulfilled the language requirement of the program where the medium of instruction is English.

2.2. Data collection

Genre-based writing instruction formed the writing component of an advanced reading and writing course I instructed. The data collection took place in tandem with the genre-based writing activities in both fall and spring semesters. The qualitative data for the present study were gathered from several sources: (1) the participants' literacy narratives, (2) their self annotations, (3) a post-instruction survey with open-ended questions, and (4) a post-instruction interview, respectively.

In the first week, I asked the participants to write on their writing education background so that they shared their previous writing experiences with me. These literacy narratives were intended as pre-instruction data for understanding both their previous writing experiences and the possible connections between these experiences and their approach to annotation writing (Cheng, 2007). Within the genre-based writing instruction described in this study, the students were engaged in several tasks for each genre-specific writing assignment: (1) reading sample texts for a given genre, (2) exploring the generic features in genre analysis tasks, and (3) writing several texts (drafts and annotations), respectively. The students wrote an annotation together with the first drafts, and this aimed to enhance reflection, awareness-raising and self assessment. In their self annotations, they explained and assessed their writing in terms of its communicative moves, lexical features, the contextual features of the targeted genre they employed in their writing and their relationship with

the reader. In addition, at the end of the spring semester, I collected the views of the participants on self annotation through open-ended questions and semi-structured interviews as post-instruction data in order to observe how they viewed self annotation as a tool of reflection, awareness-raising, and self assessment. The whole class (27 students in total) were actively involved in the writing assignments (literacy narratives as the first writing assignment, writing first drafts together with self annotations and finally second drafts for each genre practiced in class) but the analyses of the literacy narratives and self annotations were limited to the ones produced by the seven participating students. Also, pseudonyms were used in the excerpts so as not to reveal the participants' identities.

2.3. Procedure

While designing the course, I often reminded myself that this was a learner-focused and context-sensitive research project in the EAP genre-based framework. As in an earlier study (Yayli, 2011), I followed the key elements proposed by Hyland (2007) in the design of the writing activities that were based on the principles of genre-based writing instruction: (1) planning learning, (2) sequencing learning, (3) supporting learning, and (4) assessing learning. These key elements formed the backbone of the instruction.

2.3.1. Planning learning

In the first week, I prompted the whole class to remember and share their writing instruction background to see that most of the backgrounds were limited to the writing instruction they received in the prep class, and it was mainly dominated by process-writing. Next, I informed them about the requirements of this new writing course and introduced them to the concepts of genre and genre-based writing activities. Consistent with previous research (Cheng, 2007; Yayli, 2011), we focused on rhetorical dimensions of genre such as the roles of the writer, reader and purpose in genre production and on generic dimensions such as moves, steps and how words, phrases, and sentences help authors to achieve their purposes. For the selection of genres to be practiced in class, I asked the students about their genre preferences and listed the genres that they wanted to study in the course. This was motivated by the fact that students should be allowed to study genres that they will need and/or that will motivate them to learn (Johns et al., 2006). Considering the academic and non-academic needs of pre-service teachers, we formed a pool of genres from which the students chose e-mail, recipe, and essay (informative, argumentative, cause and effect and persuasive essays) as our focused genres.

2.3.2. Sequencing learning

Hyland (2007) proposes a number of different principles informing the sequence of genres, and the students and I preferred grading genres according to their levels of difficulty. Therefore, we decided to practice genres by order of e-mail, recipe, and then essay writing. Keeping in mind the distinction between genre and text type (Paltridge, 1996), I designed an essay writing component to include separate practices with informative, argumentative, cause and effect and persuasive text types respectively which are all associated with the genre, essay. It should also be noted that "[s]electing a particular genre implies the use of certain patterns, but this does not *dictate* the way we write" (Hyland, 2007, p. 152, italics original). Therefore, genre selection for the instruction described here did not aim to prescribe any types of writing but assist the students in using certain patterns by providing explicit and systematic explanations of the ways language functions in different contexts for different purposes (Hyland, 2003a).

2.3.3. Supporting learning

Collaboration, peer interaction, and scaffolding are notions with vast prominence in genre approaches. What scaffolding highlights is that learners are able to improve their existing level of performance while interacting with their peers and/or with more experienced others (Hyland, 2007). Vygotsky's term, the Zone of Proximal Development, refers to the gap between current and potential performance, and "progress from one level to the other is not achieved only through input but rather through social interaction and the assistance of more skilled and experienced others" (Hyland, 2004, p. 122).

The collaboration between teacher and learner and its changing nature are well represented in the teaching-learning cycle proposed by Feez (1998, cited in Hyland, 2004). The key stages of the cycle are: setting the context, modeling, joint construction, independent construction and comparing, respectively. First of all, I introduced the students to the concepts of genre, writer-reader relationship, the influence of reader expectation on the writer, and the power of context which shapes the reader's choice of rhetorical organizations and lexico-grammatical features. This aimed at raising the students' awareness of context, writer-reader interactions (Hyland, 2005) as well as purposes, constraints, and challenges in writing (Canagarajah, 2002). Next, I provided the students with some sample texts for each targeted genre, and the students performed genre analysis tasks on sample texts by collaborating with their peers in groups. Instead of setting rules of writing, I asked them to identify the moves and steps and describe what the authors were trying to do in these moves and steps, and which lexical items enabled them to achieve their communicative purposes. While avoiding teaching formulae, I encouraged the students to formulate their own rules (Henry & Roseberry, 1998; Pang, 2002). Keeping in mind the prominence of scaffolding, rather than directing, I led the class discussions while the groups shared and discussed their analyses one after another.

Next, for the joint and independent construction stages, I asked the students to write their own texts for the targeted genre. They frequently completed their writing tasks out of class due to time constraints, but I was at their disposal at every stage of their writing, if not in the classroom, via e-mail and collaborated with them as a mediator (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006) of genre knowledge and genre production. Also, I assigned the students to write an annotation together with the first drafts, which aimed to enhance reflection, awareness-raising, and self assessment. In their self annotations, they explained which moves and steps they included in their drafts, why they included them, and which communicative purposes these aimed to serve. Besides this generic analysis, they also explained the contextual features and the targeted reader of their texts together with the lexical features which helped them to achieve their communicative purposes. That is, they examined their own texts with the purposes of reflection and critical evaluation. As in Storch and Tapper's study (1997), self annotation writing played the dual roles of encouraging the students to act as reviewers of their own text and of providing their instructor with a means of better understanding their descriptions and explanations for the design of their texts. Having completed the first drafts and self annotations, they received my written comments and questions related to the rhetorical organization and lexico-grammatical features in their writing before they wrote their second drafts. This time my comments focused on the grammatical accuracy, spelling and document design. We used this cycle of tasks in all assignments. In essence, these tasks seemed to provide the students with the means to understand and then create their own texts for a given genre by having them experiment with different rhetorical organizations and lexico-grammatical realizations for each genre practiced.

To achieve validity and interest, two basic requirements for designing classroom-based writing activities (White, 1994), these stages followed in our genre-based writing activities were also very helpful. For validity, a consistency was established between what the students experimented with in class and what they were asked to write (Hamp-Lyons, 2003; Hyland, 2003b). Also, a high interest level was maintained because the students were observed to become intrigued especially by generic move-step analysis tasks and annotation writing. Genre-analysis tasks prompted the students to observe the connection among the rhetorical organizations, specific lexico-grammatical features, and

the communicative purposes served in a move or a step. In their self annotations, they reflected on their stimulating challenge of moving between the changes they made to produce a text different from the sample texts, and the conventions they felt they needed to comply with to produce appropriate texts for the given genre.

2.3.4. *Assessing learning*

Multi-genre portfolios were used throughout the instruction not only for assessment purposes but also as a means to enable the students to have a systematic collection of their past work. As Hamp-Lyons and Condon (2000) remind us, multi-genre portfolios allow multi-drafting, revision, peer review, collaborative learning, and reflective writing. Another advantage is that they showcase “a more prolonged and accurate picture of student writing in more natural and less stressful contexts” (Hyland, 2003b, p. 234). Keeping in mind the relevance of the use of portfolios, I informed the students as to how to be engaged in portfolio keeping. The students’ multi-genre portfolios included their literacy narratives, the sample texts provided for the textual and rhetorical analysis of each genre or text type, their generic analyses on these sample texts, their first drafts, their self annotations on their first drafts and their second drafts, respectively.

2.4. *Data analysis*

The qualitative data for this study were drawn from several sources: (1) the participants’ literacy narratives, (2) their annotations on their writing, (3) a post-instruction survey with open-ended questions, and (4) a post-instruction interview. Since annotation writing was the backbone of the study, the analysis mainly focused on the self annotations and the reported views of the participants on their annotation writing experience. Their literacy narratives were also analyzed to see the participants’ past writing activities and to get hints for their approach to genre-based writing and self annotation.

This descriptive study had multi-data sources. The literacy narratives were collected as pre-instruction data while the participants’ answers to some open-ended questions and their interview transcripts provided post-instruction data. Keeping in mind the notion that “qualitative data analysis is inherently a *language-based analysis*” (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 243, italics original), I did qualitative content analysis on the pre- and post-instruction data. I read and reread all the texts gathered (literacy narratives, answers to open-ended questions and interview transcripts) with coding purposes. This purposive reading helped me to reflect on the data and to link specific features in the data to the broader topics or concepts (Dörnyei, 2007).

The analysis of the participants’ self annotations involved the combination of data collection with analysis; therefore, the research design was the constant comparative method (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003; Glaser, 1978). Throughout the instruction, I continually read each annotation numerous times and sorted out key issues and recurring patterns related to the aforementioned three benefits of self annotation which became my categories of focus. Put simply, I integrated my analysis of each annotation into a developing categorization over different phases of instruction. While writing on the categories of benefits I was exploring, I did some more reading of the data to discover all the details about these categories and to choose some excerpts to exemplify them verbatim. Also, half of the coded-data were cross-checked by a colleague who is interested in qualitative research, and no major discrepancies were identified. The results of this qualitative analysis on self annotations and of pre- and post-instruction data were displayed together in the findings and discussion part.

3. **Findings and discussion**

While designing the genre-based writing instruction in question, I aimed to provide the students with chances of independent learning in a flexible learning context. As part of independent learning,

the students were asked to monitor and evaluate their writing in their self annotations. The main challenge embedded was that the assessment of productive skills is seen as a “highly subjective and complex domain” (Hirvela & Pierson, 2000, p. 113). In teacher-led classes, it is a daunting task to have students assess their own writing performances with a focus on the overall qualities of a text rather than the process of writing, grammatical errors or spelling (Cresswell, 2000; Porter & Cleland, 1995). In the literacy narratives of the participants, I realized that like all their classmates, the participants had never been allowed to assess their own writing performances. In fact, they all received preparatory education before they started the first year courses at university, and all writing instruction they received and described in their narratives was shaped in this prep year writing course. Before that, they did writing in middle and high school, but this did not go beyond sentence or paragraph completion. Therefore, they mostly recalled and reflected on the writing instruction they had received the previous year and the way their writing was assessed. In his literacy narrative, a participant, Ahmet, verbalized this as follows:

The only real writing course I attended was the one I had last year. We did process writing and produced several drafts before the final product. The instructor read and commented on our papers, and we revised each draft following her suggestions.

Another participant, Aliye, said:

I wrote my first paragraph in English in the prep year. After paragraph writing, we did essay writing. At first, I found the instructor’s comments harsh but in time I got used to them. I did my best to comply with her corrections which were mainly on vocabulary, grammar and paragraph design.

Another participant, Cafer, said:

Our writing was assessed by our instructor who provided some comments by using editing symbols, and then we did our revision based on this feedback.

As evident in the excerpts from the participants’ literacy narratives gathered at the beginning of the fall semester, the participants received only teacher feedback on their writing and were not allowed to assess their own performances in their previous writing instruction. While some research suggests that teacher feedback may play a crucial role in improving students’ writing performance (Ferris, 1995; Kroll, 1991; Leki, 1991), “seeking student perceptions of their own writing is equally important” (Storch & Tapper, 1997, p. 245). Therefore, in this study, the students were asked to annotate on the first drafts of their genre-specific writing tasks.

When analyzed in terms of the descriptive and evaluate types of annotations (Beck, 1982), the participants’ self annotations revealed that almost all of them were descriptive rather than evaluative. The annotations were observed to include the descriptions of the lexico-grammatical features and rhetorical realization of the communicative purposes of their writing in generic moves and steps, the writer-reader relationship in their texts, and the type of language they used (e.g., formal or informal language, active or passive sentences, specific vocabulary or examples for the content of their writing and so on). They mostly described and defended their writing without stating any weak points at all. The participants’ evaluative comments were only gained through post-instruction survey and interview. Similar to the quantitative results of Storch and Tapper’s (1997) study, the qualitative analysis on the reported views of the participants gathered at the end of the spring semester indicated that the participants mostly held positive views regarding their annotation writing experience. They found it creative, awareness-raising, and reality revealing. The participants, Aliye, Ahmet and Rana expressed their views as follows:

The writing we did this year was really different and fun. I liked this experience of writing as an activity to be defended later on in our annotations. I believe this act of defending increased

my creativity. Also it increased the attention I pay to the relationship between language structures and the meanings they give. (Aliye)

While writing my annotation, I repeatedly went back to my text and felt the need to read it several times. Writing on my moves, steps and the purposes I tried to achieve required a lot of going back and forth between the draft and the annotation. So I can say that it was a little tiring but I was able to see all the details of my text in these repeated readings. (Ahmet)

At first I found annotation writing very difficult and unnecessary, but in time I started to see the reason of doing it. This kind of writing definitely improved my text because it helped me to catch the problematic points in my first draft and fix them before I handed it in. (Rana)

While conducting the qualitative analysis on the participants' self annotations, I aimed to trace the instances of benefits that annotation writing brought. As mentioned earlier, Beck (1982) believes that the learners' practice of annotation writing brings "at least three benefits" (p. 322). The first benefit is authorial maturity which refers to the notion that "annotation helps students cease being passive pupils, who merely follow rote assignment directions ("use a specific detail in each paragraph") and become active authors, who take the initiative to write well by consciously adjusting style and annotating for it (for instance, "I used this statistic here to prove my point, and the anecdote there to retain reader interest")" (p. 322). The instances of authorial maturity were commonly observed in the participants' self annotations. In a typical self annotation, a participant, Rabia reflected on her text as follows:

I wrote an expository essay on cancer which is a popular subject. I am sure it will attract a lot of readers because I wrote it to address all people, and it is an interesting health issue. This essay might appear in a health magazine. I wrote this expository essay using a formal language because it discusses a scientific issue, cancer. As the writer, I aimed to describe cancer with its various dimensions by giving factual information. I mostly used the Simple Present Tense and long sentences some of which had a passive structure or relative clauses. In terms of generic moves and steps, I included three moves with several steps. In the first move, I started with an attractive sentence (a question) to keep the readers' attention on my essay so that they would not give up reading. In the steps under the first move, I introduced the readers to the topic with an attractive sentence, gave some essential definitions and statistics, respectively. In the second move, I analyzed the issue of cancer in details so the steps included the classification of cancer types together with detailed definitions, the number of people suffering and their frequency of prevalence. I used a formal language with an objective and informative tone. There were no emotions. Finally in the third move, I made a summary, and the steps included the restatement of the importance of the issue of cancer and my personal warnings. Only in this move, I obviously reflected my personal opinions and preferred to give some advice to warn people how to avoid cancer.

Writer-reader interaction anticipates a reader response to the written product, and this locates writers "within a community whose members are likely to recognize only certain forms ... as valid and effective" (Hyland, 2005, p. 176). Therefore, Hyland (2005) identifies the two main sides of writer-reader interaction as stance and engagement. While describing her expository essay writing practice, Rabia presented examples of stance which refers to the ways "writers present themselves and convey their judgments, opinions, and commitments" (Hyland, 2005, p. 176). This textual voice enables writers to intrude into texts in order to mark their personal authority onto their argument. The typical examples of stance found in this annotation were hedges (e.g., might), boosters (e.g., I am sure, obviously), attitude markers (e.g., popular, interesting, attractive, objective, informative, prefer) and self mention (i.e., the frequent use of 'I'). Rabia's reflection of her analysis on her own text was observed to have an objective and informative tone. Her authorial maturity is traceable as her writing

conforms to the definition of the active reader who takes the initiative to write an appropriate text by consciously adjusting her style in the text and then reflecting on this language awareness in the annotation (Beck, 1982; Cheng, 2006).

The meticulous analysis of the instances of authorial maturity in the participants' annotations indicated a consequent link between authorial maturity and language awareness. Language awareness is defined as "an approach that relies on the learners paying conscious attention to instances of language in an attempt to discover and articulate patterns and language use" (Cheng, 2006, p. 84). In essence, the participants who were annotators with authorial maturity were observed to be engaged in experiencing some basic and interrelated tenets of language awareness such as practicing shared enquiry, active engagement and dialectic relations between experiential and analytic learning, noticing and performance (Cheng, 2006). Their transition from noticing genres to performing genres and finally to exploring their performance consciously through various lenses in their annotations served to reveal the participants' development of language awareness. While they were wrestling to discover and articulate the lexico-grammatical features and rhetorical realization of their writing, they were also observed to enhance consciousness of the forms and the functions of language and make inquiries about language instead of blind acceptance of expert usages. The experiment phase with the language in their genre-specific writing tasks and the following analyses undertaken for the annotation writing tasks seemed to provide observational dimensions of authorial maturity with its consequent aspect, language awareness.

The second benefit of annotation writing is that it enhances effectiveness of teaching (Beck, 1982). Beck suggests that when learners are instructed to mark how they used skills, they grasp the gist of the assignment better and work harder on it. In their annotation writing tasks, the students were instructed to analyze their genre-specific writing texts through various lenses (the lexico-grammatical features and rhetorical realization of the communicative purposes of their writing in generic moves and steps, the writer-reader relationship in their texts and the type of language they used). After gaining procedural knowledge on the conventions of the target genre during their genre analysis tasks on sample texts, these lenses of annotation writing served as guidelines which helped the students to write, revise, and rewrite their texts. Therefore, annotation writing aimed at enhancing the effectiveness of their discovery, reflection and learning in general. In their post-instruction views, the participants stated several functions of annotation writing which helped the development of their genre-specific text production. In one of the interviews, a participant, Metin, emphasized the monitoring function of annotation writing as follows:

Annotation writing urged all of us to go to our texts again and again to either make changes in the texts or to better explain our choices in the annotation. At first, I used to write my text first and then the annotation as two consecutive activities even sometimes on different days. Soon, I realized that it was very hard because sometimes I could not find good ways of annotating. (I: What do you mean?) I mean in the very first assignments I realized that I did not include some necessary moves or steps or I did not use a language as formal as needed in my text so I changed my style. (I: How?) I decided to write my text together with the annotation or sometimes for annotation purposes I just took notes of the rhetorical and lexical features such as moves, steps or specific examples I gave appropriate to the content while writing my text. This lessened my burden and made annotation writing easier in terms of expressing and defending the features I included in the text. I mean I gradually moved to the design of all first draft writing tasks with the thought of analysis and presentation which I had to do for my self annotation.

Self assessment has gained popularity in recent years. It has been assumed to be an effective tool for both instruction and assessment (Cram, 1995; Oscarson, 1989) as it promotes self-regulated learning and autonomy (Paris & Paris, 2001). Like peer review, self monitoring makes reviewing in writing interactive (Charles, 1990; Cresswell, 2000) thus writers gain another channel to make their

voices heard. In line with this notion, self annotations analyzed in this study were observed to enable the participants to monitor their explanations and reasons of their choices. While expressing his rationale for writing his draft 'with the thoughts of analysis and presentation' in his mind all the time, Metin indicated how self annotation tasks prompted him to monitor his own text production. This corroborates the findings of some previous studies (Brown, 2005; Charles, 1990; Cresswell, 2000; Storch & Tapper, 1996) emphasizing the advantages of students self-monitoring embedded in annotation writing and the need for assisting students in monitoring their own writing rather than prompting the usual over-reliance on teacher monitoring as a desirable strategy. Instead of writing a draft and handing it in without feeling a need to revise it, self annotation writing tasks were observed to urge the participants to have several revisions, going back and forth between their texts and annotations. This therefore seemed to serve as a practice enhancing the students' engagement with their genre-specific text productions. Besides the monitoring function, another observed function related to the effectiveness of learning was its potential for raising awareness of one's abilities as one of the participants, Sevim, put forward:

I think the best side of annotation writing is that it enabled me to see my capabilities. While performing our genre analysis tasks on sample texts, at first I felt I could not write similar texts or my text would not be an appropriate one for the given genre. Although you did not give any rules to be followed or any vocabulary to be used, with the help of annotation writing which pushed me to make several changes in my text, in time I started to see the weak points in my text more easily. I felt an increasing control over my writing which got better and better with each task.

All the writing endeavors experienced in these genre-based writing activities consisted of active analysis, decision making and presentation. Self-annotation writing anticipated presentations which needed to be made in ways so that the instructor (the researcher and the writer of this manuscript as well) would likely to find them persuasive. What Sevim experienced was a valid representation of what Beck (1982) believed annotation writing would provide. Instead of instant perfection, "gradual improvement which includes developing an awareness of their own abilities" (Beck, 1982, p. 325) was observed in the evaluative comments of the participants in bits and pieces. Although frustrated at times, most of the participants observed an increasing awareness of their control over their genre-based writing performance. This kind of awareness is also crucial as while monitoring their writing performance and redesigning their texts according to the demands with which they felt they needed to comply, they started to see their weak points as well.

The third benefit of annotation writing is that it helps student-teacher communication (Beck, 1982). In her study, Charles (1990) referred to annotation writing as an enabling tool for student teacher communication over texts even in circumstances where face-to-face communication is not possible. In a related vein, while reading the students' self annotations, I observed that self-annotation writing provided a platform where I could easily hear the students' voices and get hints for their rationale for the designs of their texts. In terms of writer-reader interaction, like stance, engagement has also a part in this interaction (Hyland, 2005). Engagement stands for "an alignment dimension where writers acknowledge and connect to others, recognizing the presence of their readers, pulling them along with their argument, focusing their attention, acknowledging their uncertainties, including them as discourse participants, and guiding them to interpretations" (Hyland, 2005, p. 176). Some examples of engagement in which the recognition of the presence of the reader is felt were present in the participants' annotation excerpts. A typical example is Rana's annotation excerpt which she wrote on her recipe text:

The recipe I gave is for everyone. Sarma (stuffed vine leaves) is a vegetarian dish and easy to make. In terms of moves and steps, I included three moves in my recipe. The first move started with encouragement. I aimed to encourage my friends to make sarma by saying that it

is a very delicious and practical dish and does not take long to make it. Then, I provided the list of ingredients and what needs to be done before stuffing the leaves. The second move informed my reader on the details of how to make sarma. And finally in the third move, I provided some suggestions such as telling what it can be served with and how it can be preserved so that it can be kept fresh for a long time. Naturally, I used an informal language full of very simple sentences and imperatives because it was a recipe, and I must say that reading a recipe does not require high literacy abilities. Also, I wrote it in a friendly and sincere way by providing suggestions. It was a cooking-related topic so there was a lot of cooking-related vocabulary. Also I used order vocabulary such as first, second, third, and then to show the process of making sarma in clear steps.

Writers achieve engagement by using reader pronouns, personal asides, appeals to shared knowledge, directives and questions (Hyland, 2005). While describing and defending their texts, the participants in this study were observed to present examples of engagement as well because they constantly felt my presence as the reader of their self annotations. In the excerpt above, some examples of engagement were the use of reader pronoun (e.g., you), appeals to shared knowledge (e.g., naturally), and directives (e.g., I must say). In sum, stance and engagement are two sides of the same coin because they contribute to the interpersonal dimension of the discourse (Hyland, 2005). Therefore, it was not surprising to capture the instances of both stance and engagement in the annotation excerpts as annotation writing provides one of the enabling tools for student-teacher communication.

4. Conclusion

The number of the participants was relatively small in this study, but the findings which corroborated some previous studies indicated several benefits of annotation writing. Although the participants had no experience in assessing their own writing performance before, they welcomed the self annotation writing practice and found it creative, awareness-raising, and reality revealing. The qualitative analysis on the self-annotation excerpts revealed that while they were wrestling to discover and articulate the lexico-grammatical features and rhetorical realization of their writing and thus raising their awareness of the forms and the functions of language, the participants developed authorial maturity in tandem with language awareness. Self-annotation writing was also useful in terms of enhancing effectiveness of discovery, reflection and learning in general. That the participants were observed to monitor their text production and raise awareness of their own abilities was taken as ways it enhanced their genre-based writing practice and text production. Finally, student-teacher communication was made possible through self annotation writing. I constantly felt my presence as the reader and consumer of their annotations. This enabling tool provided me with ways for further inquiry of their explanations for their writing.

Although the findings summarized above indicate several benefits of annotation writing, and the self-annotation writing activities seemed to work properly within the genre-based writing framework followed, the participants were observed to need incessant assistance and support from the instructor. As the mediator of their learning, I frequently felt the need to remind them of the importance of building a keen awareness of the balances between the rhetorical organization and lexico-grammatical features of a given genre, their communicative purposes as the writers of their texts and the expectations of their readers. As self annotation writers, some participants needed more support than others in order not to lose the effectiveness of annotation writing in communicating their descriptions, explanations and generic analyses to their responding reader. This reminds us of the fact that training learners for autonomy should be social and co-operative (Lee, 1998). Although annotation writing can be seen as a reliable research tool to highlight different areas of student satisfaction and concerns about their own writing (Storch & Tapper, 1997), through mediation and regular prompting, benefits of self annotation writing might become observable. Since some students prefer to pass on the

responsibility for applying the principles of reviewing to the teacher rather than exercise intentional annotations (Cresswell, 2000), training learners to articulate their intentions in annotations should be prioritized so that self annotation might work properly as a tool of awareness-raising and learner autonomy.

Biostatement: Demet Yaylı, PhD, is an assistant professor in English Language Teaching at Pamukkale University, Turkey. Her research interests include genre analysis, teaching reading, teaching writing and EFL teacher education.

References

- Beck, J.P. (1982). Asking students to annotate their own papers. *College Composition and Communication*, 33(3), 322-326.
- Belcher, D. (2004). Trends in teaching English for Specific Purposes. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 24, 165-186.
- Berkenkotter, C., & Huckin, T. N. (1995). *Genre knowledge in disciplinary communication: Cognition, culture, power*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Bhatia, V. K. (2002). A generic view of academic discourse. In J. Flowerdew (Ed.), *Academic discourse* (21-40). Great Britain: Pearson Education Limited.
- Bogdan, R.C., & Biklen, S.K. (2003). *Qualitative research for education: An introduction to theory and methods*. (4th ed.). Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon.
- Brown, A. (2005). Self-assessment of writing in independent language learning programs: The value of annotated samples. *Assessing Writing*, 10, 174-191.
- Canagarajah, A.S. (2002). *Critical academic writing and multilingual students*. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press.
- Charles, M. (1990). Responding to problems in written English using a student self-monitoring technique. *ELT Journal*, 44(4), 286-293.
- Cheng, A. (2006). Understanding learners and learning in ESP genre-based writing instruction. *English for Specific Purposes*, 25, 76-89.
- Cheng, A. (2007). Transferring generic features and recontextualizing genre awareness: Understanding writing performance in the ESP genre-based literacy framework. *English for Specific Purposes*, 26, 287-307.
- Cook, G. (1989). *Discourse*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Cram, B. (1995). Self-assessment: From theory to practice. In: G. Brindley (Ed.), *Language assessment in action: Developing a workshop guide for teachers* (pp. 271-305). NCELTR: Sydney, NSW.
- Cresswell, A. (2000). Self-monitoring in student writing: Developing learner responsibility. *ELT Journal*, 54(3), 235-244.
- Dörnyei, Z. (2007). *Research methods in applied linguistics: Quantitative, qualitative and mixed methodologies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Ferris, D.R. (1995). Student reactions to teacher responses in multiple-draft composition classrooms. *TESOL Quarterly*, 29, 33-53.
- Glaser, B. (1978). *Theoretical sensitivity: Advances in the methodology of grounded theory*. Mill Valley, CA: Sociology Press.
- Halliday, M. A.K. (1994). *An introduction to functional grammar* (2nd ed.). London: Edward Arnold.
- Hamp-Lyons, L. (2003). Writing teachers as assessors of writing. In B. Kroll (Ed.), *Exploring the dynamics of second language writing* (pp. 162-241). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hamp-Lyons, L., & Condon, W. (2000). *Assessing the portfolio: Principles for practice, theory and research*. Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press.
- Henry, A. & Roseberry, R. L. (1998). An evaluation of a genre-based approach to the teaching of EAP/ESP writing. *TESOL Quarterly*, 32, 147-156.
- Hirvela, A., & Pierson, H. (2000). Portfolios: Vehicles for authentic self-assessment. In G. Ekbatani & H. Pierson (Eds.), *Learner-directed assessment in ESL* (pp. 13-48). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Hyland, K. (2003a). Genre-based pedagogies: A social response to process. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 12, 17-29.
- Hyland, K. (2003b). *Second language writing*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Hyland, K. (2004). *Genre and second language writing*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.

- Hyland, K. (2005). Stance and engagement: A model of interaction in academic discourse. *Discourse Studies*, 7, 173-192.
- Hyland, K. (2007). Genre pedagogy: Language, literacy and L2 writing instruction. *Journal of Second Language Writing* 16, 148-164.
- Johns, A. M. (1997). *Text, role, and context: Developing academic literacies*. New York: CUP.
- Johns, A. M., Bawarshi, A., Coe, R. M., Hyland, K., Paltridge, B., Reiff, M. J., et al. (2006). Crossing the boundaries of genre studies: Commentaries by experts. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 15, 234-249.
- Kroll, B. (1991). Teaching writing in the ESL context. In M. Celce-Murcia (Ed.), *Teaching English as a second or foreign language* (pp. 257-263). New York: Newbury House.
- Lantolf, J.P., & Thorne, S.L. (2006). *Sociocultural theory and the genesis of second language development*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Lee, I. (1998). Supporting greater autonomy in language learning. *ELT Journal*, 52(4), 282-289.
- Leki, I. (1991). The preferences of ESL students for error correction in college-level writing classes. *Foreign Language Annals*, 24, 203-218.
- Oscarson, M. (1989). Self-assessment of language proficiency: Rationale and applications. *Language Testing*, 6 (1), 1-13.
- Paltridge, B. (1996). Genre, text type, and the language learning classroom. *ELT Journal*, 50(3), 237-243.
- Paltridge, B. (2001). *Genre and the language learning classroom*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.
- Pang, T. (2002). Textual analysis and contextual awareness building: a comparison of two approaches to teaching genre. In A.M. Johns (Ed.), *Genre in the classroom: Multiple perspectives* (pp. 145-161). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Paris, S.G., & Paris, A.H. (2001). Classroom applications of research on self-regulated learning. *Educational Psychology*, 36(2), 89-101.
- Porter, C., & Cleland, J. (1995). *The portfolio as a learning strategy*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Raimes, A. (1991). Out of the woods: Emerging traditions in the teaching of writing. *TESOL Quarterly*, 25(3), 407-430.
- Storch, N., & Tapper, J. (1996). Patterns of NNS student annotations when identifying areas of concern in their writing. *System*, 24(3), 323-336.
- Storch, N., & Tapper, J. (1997). Student annotations: What NNS and NS university students say about their own writing. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 6(3), 245-264.
- Swales, J. (1981). *Aspects of article introductions*. Birmingham, UK: The University of Aston, Language Studies Unit.
- Swales, J. (1990). *Genre analysis: English in academic and research settings*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Swales, J. (2004). *Research genres*. NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Swales, J. & Lindemann, S. (2002). Teaching the literature review to international graduate students. In A.M. Johns (Ed.), *Genre in the classroom: Multiple perspectives* (pp. 105-119). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- White, E.M. (1994). *Teaching and assessing writing: Recent advances in understanding, evaluating, and improving student performance* (2nd ed.). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Yaylı, D. (2011). From genre awareness to cross-genre awareness: A study in an EFL context. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, 10(3), 121-129.