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Raising Awareness about Task Assessment Rubrics in Task Based Language Teaching

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Raising Awareness about Task Assessment Rubrics in Task Based Language Teaching

by

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A THESIS

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Abstract

Researchers have examined the benefits of employing a complex set of assessment rubrics as a framework for course development, teaching, learning and assessments in language programs. However, no research has explored ways to mitigate challenges faced by adult international and immigrant second language learners new to learner-centered and rubric guided curriculum that requires critical thinking and self-regulation. To raise awareness about writing task assessment rubric criteria, this qualitative study through iterative cycles of practitioner action research used Community of Inquiry (CoI) as a framework and a writing task assessment rubric as a hook to facilitate asynchronous written peer feedback in task-based English as Additional Language (EAL) learning environment.

During the seven-week long intensive language course at a post-secondary institute in Western Canada, 20 adult multi-lingual participants from didactic learning environments completed 28 tasks in the class and engaged in providing peer feedback using an institutionally mandated Canadian Language Benchmark (CLB) rubric in nine asynchronous forums. Sources of evidence from asynchronous feedback transcript, writing tasks completed by learners, and the instructor's observation notes and journals was analyzed for themes using NVIVO regarding cognitive presence, teaching presence and social presence elements in CoI framework. Results showed: (1) learners had low level of rubric awareness at the beginning of the course (2) intervention facilitated scaffolding (3) learners re-conceptualized writing and the role of rubric, and (4) asynchronous peer feedback increased rubric awareness and competency in writing. Implications are discussed in relation to adult international and immigrant language learners, task-based language teaching, and the interface between automatized explicit and implicit knowledge of rubric criteria in rubric based second language curriculum.

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List of Abbreviations

AR: Action Research

ATESL: Alberta Teachers of English as Second Language

CBIE: Canadian Bureau for International Education

CCLB: Center for Canadian Language Benchmark

CLB: Canadian Language Benchmark

CoI: Community of Inquiry

CP: Cognitive Presence

EAL: English as an Additional Language

EFL: English as Foreign Language

ELL: English Language Learning

ESL: English as Second Language

L2: Second Language

PBLA: Portfolio Based Language Assessment

PELP: Proximal English Language Program (pseudonym in this study)

RQ: Research Question

SCT: Socio-Cultural Theory

SLA: Second Language Acquisition

SP: Social Presence

TBLT: Task Based Language Teaching

TP: Teaching Presence

ZPD: Zone of Proximal Development

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

This study sought to raise language learners' awareness about the criteria in writing task assessment rubrics for successful task completion in Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT). The purpose of this action research was to explore through iterative cycles of asynchronous interaction how learners could be assisted to become aware of various criteria in the writing task assessment rubric. The effectiveness of the online peer interaction with the help of assessment rubrics was explored with a class of international and immigrant adult language learners at Canadian Language Benchmark (CLB) 6 proficiency level in my class in a post-secondary institute in Western Canada. This practitioner action research provided insights into the level of awareness the learners had about the rubric criteria at the beginning of the course, enhanced the instructor's scaffolding efforts, changed the views held by the learners about rubric and writing, automatized explicit knowledge, and improved competency in writing.

Context of the Study

International education is a constitutive pillar of Canada's long-term competitiveness in many respects. While Canadians who study abroad benefit from the exposure to new cultures and ideas, students from abroad who study in Canada bring with them the values that stimulate cross-cultural competencies and innovative ideas. Owing to the quality and popularity of Canadian education system and the reputation Canada enjoys in many other areas, the overseas student enrolment in Canada rose by 135% between 2010 and 2020 (Canadian Bureau of International Education, 2021). According to Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC, 2020), there were more than 642,000 international students in 2019, and they contributed more than \$22 billion to Canadian economy and supported more than 170,000 Canadian jobs (El-Assal, 2020). Worldwide, Canada ranked third top destination for learning behind the United

States of America and Australia in 2020. As laid out in Government of Canada's International Education Strategy (IES, 2019), the surge in international student population will continue in the coming years.

According to Language Canada (2020), every year approximately 150,000 international students are registered in Language Pathways programs that help them to prepare for further education in Canada. Proximal English Language Program (a pseudonym used in this study; acronym PELP is used throughout this document) at a post-secondary institute in Western Canada is one such pathway, and it attracts hundreds of adult international and immigrant students every year. The institute strives to offer students practical experience and theoretical knowledge in a real-world context. Students receive hands-on learning experience in unique laboratories and classrooms, and they participate in applied research on campus with industry partners that enable them to apply their learning to meet current industry needs. In addition to equipping the learners with the language proficiency required at workplace, completion of PELP CLB 8 credit course helps learners to meet the language proficiency requirement for admission to career focused programs at the institute and similar educational settings.

In keeping with the institute's wider vision, PELP aims to provide language instruction to adult international students and immigrants. The TBLT curriculum in PELP that was revised in 2014 borrowed heavily from post-method pedagogy in second language acquisition encouraged by sociocultural perspectives that gave way to a teacher generated theory of practice, and learner centered approaches within the parameters of particularity, practicality and possibility (Kumaravadivelu, 2006). The program promotes a task-based approach (Willis, 1996) to adult language learning in blended courses (CLB 4 through CLB 8) by following the principles of integration, recycling, spiraling, sequencing, and scaffolding (Roessingh, 2014).

As recommended in Centre for Canadian Language Benchmarks (CCLB, 2013, 2017), and Alberta Teachers of English as Second Language (ATESL, 2011) curriculum documents, PELP emphasizes the importance of task assessment rubrics both in ongoing formative feedback integrated into teaching-learning process, and meaningful summative assessments linked to the outcomes specified in the new TBLT curriculum. Research shows that well-designed rubrics incorporate the assessment task criteria, assess quality linked to each criterion and grade the performance level of the students (Andrade, Du & Mycek, 2010; Gezie et al. 2012; Reddy & Andrade 2010). Also, rubrics are valuable tools in curriculum development, in curriculum review, and in planning teacher training (Bharuthram, 2015; Cooper & Gargan, 2009; Lancaster, 2015). Rubrics can be used to graph program goals, and rubric-based performance feedback interventions can enhance student motivation resulting in better student performance (Brookhart & Chen, 2015; Ene & Kosobucki, 2016; Koenig et al., 2016) because teaching and learning become more focused (Tchekmedyian, 2017; Yamanishi, 2019). Besides, the inclusion of higher order critical thinking components such as applying, analyzing, evaluating, and creating in the task assessment rubrics (Cannors, 2008) makes language assessments more reliable (Litz & Smith, 2004; Mahmoudi, 2020).

As studies recommend (Andrade & Brookhart, 2020; Gibson, 2013; Panadero & Romero, 2014), in the PELP curriculum rubrics are also used to better understand the learners and to make the learners understand their own strengths and weaknesses. Well-designed rubrics help students to review their strengths and weaknesses (Gibson, 2013), to set their own goals (Sadler, 2009), and to gauge their learning process (Andrade & Du, 2005; Reddy & Andrade, 2010). Lombardi and Oblinger (2008) argued that in learner centered and outcome-based education, students become more empowered, and they have the right to transparency in how they are assessed. One

of the tools used in higher education to demystify the learning process and to make the assessment tasks authentic is the use of rubrics (Allen & Tanner, 2006; Stevens & Levi, 2013). In language program such as PELP that incorporate CLB competencies in learning and assessment tasks, students are not tested on their memory and understanding of the content taught, but on their communicative competence in using the language (CLB, 2013). The task assessment rubrics employed in formative and summative feedback serve as a point of reference for the learners to understand what competency they must acquire, and how they will be assessed (CLB, 2013).

However, if learners should benefit from assessment rubric employed as a reflective learning tool, various components in the assessment rubric should be unpacked for them (Bharathuram, 2015). Rubrics are not entirely self-explanatory and due to confusion, learners may not feel comfortable using it to their advantage (Gezie et al., 2012). Stevens and Levi (2013) reported that some teachers did not use rubrics since they did not fully understand what they were and how they could be used to improve teaching and learning experience. Andrade (2005) recommended explaining rubrics clearly to learners if they should maximize the benefits from them. They need assistance in building a personal understanding of this complex phenomenon (Schwartz & Fischer, 2003). Bharathuram (2015) suggested that an effective way to encourage learners to invest in the rubrics is by teaching them how to use it.

Using rubric can be even more problematic for international and immigrant students who are already challenged by lack of language proficiency (Karkar-Esperat, 2018) and overwhelmed having to adapt to learning style from mostly teacher fronted lecturing to a more learner-centered, interactive approach such as the TBLT in PELP. Along with language barriers, immigrant and international students already have difficulty understanding the intricacies of the

new education system (Lai & Ishiyama, 2004; Ngo, 2002; Roessingh, 2004). In traditional learning environments teachers play a guru-like role of absolute authority and knowledge; however, in social constructivist learning environment, the teachers play the role of a facilitator and a guide on the side (Durkin 2008; Phuong-Mai et al., 2005). When making the switch from traditional to constructivist learning approach, for international and immigrant students, thinking for themselves can make their academic life very different (Stevens & Levi, 2013). Language learners often do not understand the critical role of language in learning, and they may be unfamiliar with generally accepted principles and practices for teaching and learning English as a second language within a communicative framework (Roessingh, 2006). Although transitioning into the educational institution in a foreign country can be an exciting time, it is more about a challenging experience for many international students who often must grapple with the newness of post-secondary education and cross-cultural differences in academic expectations (Kumar, 2013; Roessingh, 2016). The switch from teacher-fronted to learner-centered approach is complex as it requires learners to change the way they do things to learn which in turn requires them to develop a new belief system. As Yoshida (2013) argued, for second language learners to change their beliefs of actions to become autonomous learners, they need to develop confidence. In other words, learners must appropriate their beliefs to lead their beliefs to new actions (Yang & Kim, 2011) which involve both social and action dimensions (Navarro & Thornton, 2011).

Institutions who admit ESL students have an ethical obligation to understand the specific needs of these learners and to take an active role in helping them to succeed in their academic pursuits. According to the specific contexts and the unique needs of the students, institutions need to adopt varying approaches (Andrade, 2017; Hartshorn et al., 2017). The conflicts that PELP learners face are particularly related to their awareness about using the task assessment

rubric to guide their language learning, and it can be as challenging as trying to understand the wider concepts underlying the East versus West dichotomy in education (Durkin, 2008).

Research and interest in the use of rubric in language education has increased steadily, but no known published studies to date have addressed the ways in which adult second language learners adapt to or change their beliefs about the use of rubric for critical thinking through social interaction and action. Specifically, research has not explored ways to raise awareness about writing task assessment rubric criteria in the context of TBLT for adult international and immigrant EAL programs.

Statement of Problem

As a language program, PELP has carefully considered the integration of task assessment rubrics into the curriculum design (Bharuthram, 2015; Cooper & Gargan, 2009; Lancaster, 2015), the teaching-learning process (Koenig et al, 2016), teacher development (Bharuthram, 2015; Cooper & Gargan, 2009), and the grading of formative and summative assessments (Gezie et al. 2012; Reddy & Andrade, 2010). Critical thinking components in the task assessment rubrics (Cannors, 2008) are deliberately included so that the rubric could be used as a powerful tool to better understand the learners and to make the learners understand their own strengths and weaknesses (Andrade & Brookhart, 2020; Gibson, 2013; Panadero & Romero, 2014). Within the broader learner-centered approach, the rubrics are supposed to help learners to demystify the learning process, to set their own goals (Sadler, 2009), to gauge their learning process (Andrade & Du, 2005) and to become more empowered (Lombardi & Oblinger, 2008).

However, raising language learner's awareness about the rubric criteria creates a problem for the instructors as there is little research to suggest ways to raise awareness about writing task assessment rubric criteria that is integrated into a fast-paced curriculum to leverage reflective and

self-regulated learning. There are many theories about the role of awareness in SLA. Among them, several studies have reported learning without awareness is possible, but it requires a long time (Leung & Williams, 2012, 2014; Paciorek & Williams, 2015a, 2015b; Rebuschat & Williams, 2012; Rebuschat et al., 2013; Rogers & Rebuschat, 2015; Schmidt, 1990, 1995, 2010; Kerz et. al, 2017). Other researchers (R. Ellis, 2008; Rosa & Leow, 2004; Schmidt, 1994) pointed out the facilitative role of consciousness in SLA. More importantly, recent literature in SLA have affirmed the facilitative role of automatized explicit knowledge on implicit knowledge and different levels of interface between them (DeKeyser, 2015; N. Ellis, 2005, 2015; R. Ellis, 2008; Hulstijn, 2002; Paradis, 2009; Kerz et al., 2017; Schmidt, 1995; Suzuki & DeKeyser, 2017). However, these studies generally examined awareness in form-focused language instruction (Aninga & Curcic, 2015; Aninga & Rebuschat, 2015; Svalberg, 2007, 2016) from empirical research perspectives in mostly artificial or semi-artificial learning environments (Leow et al., 2014). There has been no research to date to raise awareness about writing task assessment rubric criteria through constructivist approach in a natural classroom setting to train learners in critical thinking skills and to enable them to apply rubric awareness in vicarious tasks.

The general problem is that international and immigrant students from traditional teacher fronted learning environments enrolled in learner-centered language programs have difficulty adjusting to the intricacies of constructivist approach (Durkin 2008; Lai & Ishiyama, 2004; Ngo, 2002; Kumar, 2013; Phuong-Mai et al., 2005; Roessingh, 2004). The specific problem is that PELP learners in the rubric guided TBLT course do not have adequate awareness about writing task rubric criteria to advance their competency in writing through self-regulation. Despite my personal efforts as a classroom instructor in PELP to engage students in using task assessment rubrics to guide their learning, I had observed that many students lacked awareness about the

rubric criteria. They hardly ever referred to the rubric during the in-class task stages and while completing other assignments. They considered the rubrics merely as instructor tools to measure their achievement (Bharathram, 2015) rather than using them as guidelines for leveraging their own learning process (Andrade & Du, 2005). As a result, many students had difficulty in achieving the expected language proficiency by completing the courses. A knowledge gap exists as to what needs to be done in a holistic approach to SLA in a natural learning environment as in TBLT to raise awareness about writing task assessment rubric criteria through constructivist approach.

Some publications offer hypothetical solution regarding how to use rubrics with ESL learners. For example, Brookhart (2013) recommended using rubrics to provide structure when giving constructive peer feedback. Su (2020) investigated the effects of rubric training in students' self-assessment and awareness of interpreting, Wang (2017) studied the factors affecting rubrics' effectiveness for promoting student learning, Haught et al. (2017) studied graduate student perceptions of course rubrics, Yamanishi, et al. (2019) examined the applicability of a five-dimensional rubric which features both analytic and holistic assessments to classrooms in an EFL context, and Zhang et al. (2018) researched the effects of rubric use in flipped learning activities on students' learning achievement, metacognitive awareness, and cognitive load through a quasi-experiment. This qualitative action research study looked at the effects of using a writing task assessment rubric in asynchronous peer feedback in a TBLT class of adult international and immigrant learners.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this action research was to investigate how awareness about the use of task assessment rubrics can be raised in contemporary task-based language teaching through the

intentional use of a task assessment rubric in asynchronous online discussion. Specifically, I wanted to explore the effect of online peer feedback on tasks completed by classmates about meeting the criteria in the rubric. As an instructor and researcher, I wanted my learners to effectively use the rubric and thereby guide their own learning to achieve the expected competency in writing. I also wanted to improve my own practice by engaging my learners in deep constructivism (Scardamalia & Bereiter, 2014). The study involved adult international and immigrant EAL learners in my own PELP class that follows TBLT curriculum. This study used a constructivist approach within sociocultural theoretical framework by employing action research approach that included three iterative cycles of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting. The tasks participants completed in the class and the language learners used in asynchronous discussion provided insight into the effects of using the rubric in feedback as well as the level of awareness and the type of awareness they developed about the rubric.

Significance of the Study

Success of international and immigrant students is critical to Canada in remaining competitive in world renowned education. More than 642,000 international students studied in Canada in 2019 (IRCC, 2020) generating more than 22 billion dollars in Canadian economy and creating thousands of jobs. The national policy on immigration lays out study permit as a pathway to permanent residence and citizenship. In 2018, more than 54,000 former students became permanent residents in Canada. This implies that the number of international students who make Canada a destination of choice will most likely surge in the coming years. There have been very few studies that have analyzed how international students cope with education in Canada. A few studies (Abada et al., 2008; Roessingh & Douglas, 2012) have shown that although international and immigrant learners are persistent in their educational pursuits, they

complete their post-secondary programs with less academic stability and confidence than they may be capable of achieving. It is vital to have strategies to help these students adjust to learner-centered education in Canadian post-secondary institutions.

The outcome from the action research is of utmost importance to its participants. As McNiff and Whitehead (2009) pointed out, the aim of all research is to generate knowledge. In this action research, the aim was specifically to raise awareness about the criteria in the writing task assessment rubric, so learners could acquire writing skills, and thereby be successful in future study and work settings. It was thought that learners would have more opportunity to notice at a deeper level various aspects of the writing rubric criteria as they engaged in asynchronous peer feedback. Most of these adult learners had been very successful academically in their own countries, so poor performance in their first academic program in a foreign country would blight their moral and future education plans. Thorough understanding of how the course is designed around rubric and why learners should take initiative to navigate through the course to be successful is important to achieve their goals. While raising awareness about the criteria in the rubric, learners also got training in critical thinking skills. The learners who participated in this action research may even become role models in adjusting to learner centered approaches to learning, and their perspectives may offer guidance in navigating a potentially unfriendly study setting and help future learners to thrive in learning environments that demand critical thinking and self-regulation.

The rationale for this study also emanated from my desire to improve my own practice continually (Hinchey, 2008; McNiff, 2013; Brydon-Miller et al., 2020). It was anticipated that as I engaged in these reiterative cycles of reflection, observation, planning and acting, my own current practice trying to help learners to build awareness and critical thinking would improve.

Also, the findings from this study would be of great value to PELP department. When the findings from AR are shared, they can be immediately used by the stakeholders (Creswell, 2015). I can share the results with the PELP curriculum specialist to integrate the awareness building strategies across various levels and courses. To bring about the shift in classroom culture across the department, it would also be important to mentor the instructors on the required changes to facilitate awareness building. The insights from this action research will equip me to lead a collaborative approach with the goal of continual improvement for learner success. Over time, these humble steps may have increased impact on an overall cultural change in helping international and immigrant learners in SLA. Several other stakeholder groups may benefit from this study that focused on assisting international and immigrant students to integrate into learner-centered constructivist classrooms. Other departments in the institution and program that use rubrics to gauge learning can draw insights from this study to make the tools more meaningful to learners.

Research Questions

The primary objective of this action research was to raise awareness about the criteria in the writing task assessment rubric. To achieve this effectively, the following research questions were pursued in this study.

RQ1: What is the nature of the awareness language learners have about the writing task assessment rubric at the beginning of the TBLT course?

RQ2: What are the effects of using writing task assessment rubric in asynchronous peer feedback in an adult TBLT course?

As there is little research on why adult ESL learners face difficulty in using the rubric to guide their learning, a quantitative research design was deemed limiting. Instead, it was thought

that a qualitative study would potentially unfold many layers and dimensions of the effect of using writing task assessment rubric in asynchronous peer interaction. Therefore, a qualitative action research was used to uncover insights and to develop theory on how to raise awareness about the use of rubrics.

Overview of Research Design

A qualitative research methodology was pursued in this study because the focus was on naturally occurring, ordinary events in natural setting (Miles et al., 2014) in my own classroom. In this action research, as a practitioner and investigator, I wanted to explore concrete and specific reality (Hendricks, 2017; Mertler, 2014), and capture the complexity of truth as it unfolded when new designs and strategies for improvement (Hinchey, 2008; Meesuk & Wongrugsu, 2020) were incorporated into existing curriculum to raise awareness about the rubric. Adopting a constructivist approach allowed for the “knowledge of practice” (McNiff, 2013, p. 89) where experiences of multiple people were explored according to individual experiences and then interwoven to explore emerging theory (Charmaz, 2006) and the construction of new multiple realities (McNiff, 2013). In constructivist approach it is assumed that individuals participating in this study could have differing experience with the writing task rubrics while pursuing the PELP courses and the individual experience may be influenced by their past and present environment. Therefore, a qualitative design also allowed for the generation of theory from the start of the collection of data over a sustained period in the natural classroom setting (Charmaz, 2006), and it had the flexibility in terms of data collection times, fine-tuning of tools and methods as the study progressed (Miles et al., 2014).

In this study, non-probability total sampling (Slavin, 2007) was chosen because the participants had to be selected from a naturally occurring group (Pickard & Childs, 2013) that

was my own class. All the 20 immigrant and international students in my seven-week long CLB 6 intense reading and writing class participated in this research study. Data was collected from learners' asynchronous discussion script, tasks completed by the learners and the instructor's observation notes and journals. Thematic analysis of data was done with the help of NVivo12 software to organize and analyze the raw data and to discover deep insights.

The Researcher

This action research project emerged from my own felt need (Hinchey, 2008) as a TBLT practitioner in PELP to improve the learning experience for my students and has been inspired by diverse and extensive experience both as a language learner and as a teacher. Besides being functional in four languages, the two undergraduate and three graduate programs I have completed are related to learning and teaching English as an additional language, and these programs were pursued passionately, so I could be more cogent as a language educator. During the past two decades, I have availed the opportunities to teach, supervise and reflect on a dozen English as an Additional Language (EAL) programs to almost 3000 students from over 85 countries. I have taught young and old, literacy and advanced, academic and business, settlement and employment, private and public, competitive and professional, students and teacher trainees, home and overseas, and in-class and on-online.

During my teaching tenures in India, Oman and Kazakhstan, I had noticed numerous academic failures primarily due to students' poor performance on standardized tests in second language classes. These failures were mostly attributed to poor teaching and learning environments with less emphasis on learners and greater focus on teachers (Lessard-Clouston, 1998). On the contrary, I noticed that the adult international and immigrant language learners taking PELP courses had absolute sense of ownership over meaning-making due to the

investment they had made (Norton, 2010). Like most other English language learners, PELP learners viewed English language proficiency as a passport to individual freedom, privileges, entitlements, the world of opportunities, and international development (Ricento, 2015). At the same time, since the implementation of the new TBLT curriculum in the PELP program in 2014, I had noticed that learners had difficulty understanding how the curriculum is designed around task assessment rubrics, and why the rubrics are important in their learning process.

Assumptions, Delimitations and Limitations

This action research was undertaken on the assumption that through planned interventions (Alexakos, 2015), learners can be helped to use task assessment rubrics as a framework for setting their own goals, and as a guide for reflection and self-assessment that directs their learning (Brookhart, 2013; Cockett & Jackson, 2018; Su, 2020; Wang, 2017). Another assumption in this study was that data on the participants' awareness about rubric criteria could be gleaned from the script contributed by learners in asynchronous peer feedback, the tasks they complete in the class, and the observation notes and journals completed by the instructor. Moreover, it was assumed that all participants honestly engaged in the asynchronous peer feedback and in-class task completion to the best of their ability (Dahl, 2014; Kemmis, 2006). Research about awareness in SLA have historically used quantitative approach, but this study assumed that a qualitative approach would provide insight into the complex layers and dimensions of the effect of using writing task assessment rubric in asynchronous peer interaction (McNiff, 2013).

The conceptual boundaries in this study were narrowed down through conscious exclusions and inclusions. Firstly, the objective of this study was delimited to exploring the effect of online interactions on raising learners' awareness about the writing task assessment rubric criteria for

successful task completion. Secondly, the study was delimited to the use of writing task assessment rubrics in the specific TBLT context in PELP program. As a result, the timeline for collection of evidence also was limited to seven weeks which is the duration of the fast-track course. Thirdly, convenience sampling narrowed the scope of the study to the instructor's CLB6 course in PELP. A large and more diverse group of participants in multiple courses may provide more insights into how to raise awareness, and a comparison of data from different classes may provide commonalities and differences of strategies to be used across the levels. Due to these delimitations, the findings from this study may not be generalizable to other learning contexts.

Having worked as an ESL educator for more than two decades, one of the key limitations in this study would be the researcher's own subjectivity in analyzing the context and the evidence (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2015). Participant reactivity (Maxwell, 2017) which results from the classroom instructor taking on the role of the researcher is another limitation in this study. Also, the constraints of the context specific setting in the study such as the duration of the fast-track course, the number of participants who volunteered to participate, participant dynamics, and the instruments chosen to collect and analyze data would have limited the scope of the study.

Operational Definitions

Assessment Rubric. Scoring guide used by PELP program to evaluate the quality of students constructed responses on each of the assignments in writing courses

Awareness. The ability to explain or make sense of the observed phenomena through deeper consciousness (Schmidt, 1993)

Brightspace (D2L). A comprehensive web-based learning system that combines education and learning resources with features to build an integrated e-learning environment

Canadian Language Benchmark. A description of a person's ability in specific language skills (CCLB, 2015)

Communicative competence. The ability to understand and communicate messages effectively and appropriately in a particular social situation (CCLB, 2015)

Discussion Forum. An online collaboration area to post, to read and to reply to threads on different topics, to share thoughts about course materials, to ask questions, to share files, or to work with peers on assignments and homework

English as an Additional Language (EAL). English taught to people who have moved to an English-speaking country and whose first language is not English

Peer feedback. Communication process through which learners enter reflective criticism related to performance and standards of another student's work (Liu & Carless, 2006)

PELP student. A student enrolled in Proximal English Language Program (pseudonym used in this study) that has not completed CLB 8

Task. A goal-oriented activity in which learners use language to achieve a real outcome (Willis, 1996)

Summary

Using a qualitative action research, this study sought to raise awareness among adult international and immigrant learners about writing task assessment rubric criteria in TBLT to achieve expected language competency in writing. As there is no previous study on the use of rubric by EAL learners in TBLT, there is a knowledge gap as to the ways in which adult international and immigrant learners can be helped to use the rubrics effectively to guide their learning in a constructivist learning environment. It was anticipated the results of this study may

serve multiple stakeholders such as EAL language instructors, TBLT curriculum developers and administrators, and most importantly future international and immigrant language learners.

There are four more chapters. In the second chapter I make a case for the current study by focusing on a comprehensive review of literature on the principles underlying the concept of raising awareness about writing task rubrics through online peer interaction in task-based second language teaching as knowledge building according to sociocultural theory. In the third chapter I describe and justify in detail the methodology chosen for this study as well as the research design. Specific details about how the study was conducted, an outline of the ethical considerations, delimitations, and limitations are also included. In Chapter IV I describe the analysis of the data collected along with the key findings. In the final chapter, the findings are interpreted in the light of the literature reviewed.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

The objective of this action research was to explore with a class of adult international and immigrant students in Canada how online interactions can promote language learners' awareness about the criteria in the writing task assessment rubrics in task-based second language learning, so they can complete the tasks successfully. The study pursued the following research questions:

RQ1: What is the nature of the awareness language learners have about writing task assessment rubric at the beginning of the TBLT course?

RQ2: What are the effects of using writing task assessment rubric in asynchronous peer feedback in an adult TBLT course?

There is substantial research on the significance of raising awareness in second language acquisition. Most published works lean towards form focused second language learning. Although these previous studies offer valuable insight into second language acquisition, they only provide partial solutions for contemporary approaches to rubric based TBLT curriculum and second language acquisition, particularly for adult international and immigrant learners. A limited body of knowledge exists regarding various aspects of this action research, but the extensive search did not render any situated in the specific context in this study. The literature review for this study focused on: (a) the theoretical principles underlying the concept of raising awareness in SLA, (b) the role of awareness according to sociocultural theory, and (c) the role of awareness in Task-Based Language Teaching.

Search Strategy

Based on the literature review components outline, multiple information sources including books, dissertations, peer reviewed journals and professional internet resources were used to conduct this literature review. Most of these sources were accessed through University of

Calgary Library online portal, *Journal of Second Language Writing*, ProQuest, SAGE, and ERIC. Key words and phrases included, but not limited to second language acquisition, awareness in second language learning, language learning theories, task-based language teaching, rubrics in second language learning, challenges faced by international language learners, asynchronous language learning and community of inquiry. Because of the nature of the bodies of literature reviewed, no specific time frame was used around which to conduct this research. For example, the historical development of language learning theories, the development of TBLT as an effective language learning approach, and the use of Community of Inquiry (CoI) framework were considered significant, and therefore, it was concluded that an arbitrary criterion such as a time frame might preclude the inclusion of substantial relevant material. However, effort was made to include the most recent and closely relevant literature in this review.

Awareness in Second Language Acquisition

Interest in the role of awareness in second language acquisition (SLA) can be traced back to Krashen's (1977, 1979, 1981, 1994) attempts to distinguish between explicit and implicit knowledge resulting from the processes of learning and acquisition. According to his proposals, 'learning' is a conscious process that involves knowing 'about' the language and its structures (Krashen, 1981). He associated this with more traditional language classrooms where the focus was on transmitting metalinguistic information and memorizing prescriptive rules with little to no emphasis on communication. In what he termed as the monitor theory, 'learning' is not about communication, but about monitoring the accuracy of what is being produced. In contrast to this explanation of learning as a conscious process, Krashen (1982) presented second language development as 'acquisition' which is an unconscious process resulting from exposure to input. He postulated that the ability to use language freely, spontaneously, and fluently comes because

of acquisition through exposure and processing for meaning over a period. He emphasized that explicit language learning and metalinguistic awareness has no to minor role in language acquisition.

Krashen's work helped to establish a widely accepted distinction between implicit and explicit knowledge within SLA. The distinction between the two types of learning and knowledge as well as the interface between them has been crucial elements in understanding how L2 proficiency develops (Andringa & Rebuschat, 2015), in placing consciousness within a cognitive framework (Truscott, 2015b), and in continuing to be a dominant focus for research in SLA (N. Ellis, 2015; R. Ellis, 2005; Hulstijn, 2015). There has been substantial amount of research concerning the role of awareness in L2 acquisition and the possibility of learning without awareness, the process of measuring awareness, and the interface between explicit and implicit knowledge (Andringa & Rebuschat, 2015). These three developments in research are discussed further in the following sections.

The Role of Awareness in SLA

Much more than the contributions Krashen himself made with the theories he hypothesized in the field of SLA, he is acknowledged for the criticism he faced (Gregg, 1984; Hulstijn & Hulstijn, 1984) and the influence he had on the more convincing alternative theories that emerged regarding the role of consciousness in language acquisition (Leowen, 2015). Several studies were conducted on the role of awareness in L2 acquisition and the possibility of learning without awareness (Hama & Leow, 2010; Leo & Hama, 2013; Leung & Williams, 2012; Rebuschat et al., 2015; Schmidt, 1990, 1995a, 1995b, 2001; Williams, 2005, 2009). Notably, Schmidt (1990, 1993, 1994a, 1994b, 1995, 2001, 2010) argued in favor of the facilitative and essential role of awareness in second language acquisition. Drawing on a wide range of research

related to cognitive sciences he proposed a model known as “noticing hypothesis” to establish the significant role awareness plays in SLA. He stated that learners must notice the input to continue advancing their language abilities or to grasp linguistic features. The hypothesis differentiates linguistic input from intake in that the latter is considered a form of conscious process. This model consists of three levels: perception, noticing and understanding.

The first level is perception. Schmidt (1995) pointed out that when ‘perceiving’ something, the input can be registered without any conscious awareness. He mentioned that it is even questionable if perception should be considered as learning since the effect of the information processed is subtle and difficult to explain or verify. Other researchers in cognitive psychology (Perruchet, 2008) have also debated if learning can occur below the threshold of awareness.

The second level in Schmidt’s model is noticing in which only surface features of the input are noticed (2001). Awareness at the level of noticing is similar to focal attention and is different from perception in that the occurrences are registered with low level of conscious awareness (Schmidt, 1995). According to Schmidt (1993, p.213), noticing is “related to rehearsal within working memory and the transfer of information to long-term memory, to intake, and to item learning.” He used the term ‘noticing’ to mean conscious registration of the occurrence of some event, and it refers to surface level phenomena and item language. While Schmidt made a connection between noticing and understanding, Truscott (2015a) provided a connection between perception and noticing in his definition of noticing as “the construction of a follow-up perceptual representation consisting of a selected part of the original input representation” (p.164).

The third and final level of awareness in this model is at the level of understanding. Schmidt (1993) used the term ‘understanding’ to imply recognition of a general principle, rule, or pattern,

and it refers to deeper level of abstraction related to meaning. This requires the ability to explain or make sense of the observed phenomena through deeper consciousness. It would demonstrate signs of problem solving and processes of metacognition such as planning, monitoring and assessing of one's understanding and performance. This level of awareness results in the "organization of material in long term memory, to restructuring, and to system learning" (Schmidt, 1993, p. 213). In his noticing hypothesis, Schmidt posited that awareness at the level of understanding is not necessary for second language acquisition; however, awareness at the level of noticing is a necessary and sufficient condition.

This proposition faced strong criticism regarding theoretical and methodological issues and was supported by contradictory empirical findings. Tomlin and Villa (1994) expressed doubt in the validity of the method and duration of the study conducted by Schmidt and Frota (1986) to back their noticing hypothesis. Also, Gass (1997) argued that not all learning requires input, and that certain aspects of language do not require noticing. Besides, Carroll (2006a) asserted that all the information required to acquire language may not be present in the input which automatically invalidates the noticing hypothesis. Truscott (1998) questioned the basis for the noticing hypothesis in cognitive psychology. He also argued that since the hypothesis does not specifically target the grammar of natural language, its scope should be limited to metalinguistic knowledge as opposed to overall language competence. In the years that followed, Schmidt continued to reiterate the importance of noticing and even the necessity of noticing under certain conditions for SLA to occur. For example, he pointed out that noticing is essential particularly with non-salient or redundant grammatical features (2001). However, Schmidt (2010) retracted from his earlier noticing hypothesis and acknowledged that both noticing and understanding have facilitative function in the process of second language acquisition. Schmidt (2001, and onwards)

has maintained his position regarding the importance of attentional processes in SLA, a view that is also subsumed within several theoretical frameworks in SLA (N. Ellis, 2005; Leow, 2015).

Measuring Implicit and Explicit Knowledge

The second realm of research about awareness in SLA has focused on the measurement of awareness. Among them many have concentrated on how to measure awareness while participants are engaged in a learning task and others have tried to understand how to measure awareness of the product of learning (Aninga & Curcic, 2015; R. Ellis, 2005; Grey et al., 2014; Hamrick & Rebuschat, 2012; Rebuschat, 2013; Rebuschat et al., 2015a). Although Krashen's (1981, 1982, 2003) proposals about explicit and implicit knowledge were not well received by SLA scholars, his arguments helped garner renewed interest in mapping the role of implicit and explicit learning in second language development (N. Ellis, 2005; R. Ellis, 1994; Han & Finneran, 2014; Paradis, 2009). There have been attempts (DeKeyser, 2009; R. Ellis, 2004, 2005; R. Ellis et al., 2009) to clearly define and operationalize implicit and explicit knowledge.

Table 1: Criteria for Measuring Explicit and Implicit Knowledge

Criterion	Explicit Knowledge	Implicit Knowledge
Awareness	Response based on rules	Response using feeling
Time	Under time pressure	Under no time pressure
Attention	Primary focus on form	Primary focus on meaning
Systematicity	Variable responses	Consistent responses
Certainty of response	Low degree	High degree
Metalinguistic knowledge	Required	Encouraged
Learnability favored	Late, form focused instruction	Early acquisition

Adapted from: R. Ellis, 2005

The seven criteria in Table 1 as analyzed and conceptualized by R. Ellis (2005) have helped SLA researchers to find some common ground when measuring and distinguishing between explicit knowledge from implicit knowledge. The seven ways of distinguishing them are summarized below.

Awareness. Explicit knowledge is conscious, and the learners are aware they possess the linguistic knowledge. For example, someone who possesses explicit knowledge would be able to explain the rules governing a linguistic system (R. Ellis, 2005; Pothos, 2007; Shanks, 2005). Explicit knowledge can be measured by asking learners to report retrospectively if they used the rule in responding to the task. In contrast, implicit knowledge represents the tacit knowledge which we do not know we possess. Often, we realize it through feelings of intuition.

Time available. Knowledge can be categorized as explicit or implicit depending on the time learners must respond to the task. If learners are pressured under time, the tasks make demands on long term memories, and the knowledge they use is implicit. On the contrary, if they have an opportunity to plan their response carefully, the tasks make demands on short term memories, and the learners employ explicit knowledge.

Focus of Attention. If the task requires focus on form as in traditional grammar exercises, learners use explicit knowledge. However, if the task prioritizes meaning making through fluency such as message creation to convey information or opinions, learners employ implicit knowledge.

Systematicity. If learners are consistent with the responses they provide, they tap into implicit knowledge, but if their responses are variable to the tasks, they employ explicit knowledge.

Certainty. In contrast to the low level of certainty about target language norms when employing explicit knowledge, learners express high degree of confidence about the linguistic forms they have produced in their responses if they draw on implicit knowledge. At the same time learners with explicit knowledge might demonstrate confidence in their explicit rules, so this criterion should be treated with circumspection.

Metalanguage. Another characteristic of explicit knowledge is that it can be verbalized to some degree by the person who possesses it. As opposed to someone with implicit knowledge who might base the decision on feelings, someone with explicit knowledge will be able to explain why such a decision was made in using certain grammatical structures in certain situations. Engagement in metalinguistic dialogue is indication of conscious effort to create learning opportunities (Ahn, 2016). Implicit knowledge can be only inferred from the behaviour because the person who possesses it will not be able to verbalize it (Rebuschat, 2013).

Learnability. When it comes to adult L2 learners, there is a general agreement among scholars that explicit knowledge is more learnable than implicit knowledge (Munoz, 2006). One of the arguments in support of this view is that individual difference variables such as age and aptitude put constraints in L2 learning. For example, despite prolonged instructions, most adolescent or adult learners do not achieve a near-native level of language proficiency; however, if L2 acquisition began as a child, they would display high levels of implicit knowledge (R. Ellis, 2005; Loewen, 2015, Long, 2013, 2015). In this case, for late beginners, developing implicit knowledge might be constrained by the variables, but they would still be possible to display explicit knowledge (DeKeyser, 2003; N. Ellis, 2005). Another learnability characteristic between the two types of knowledge is the claim that not all linguistic features can be learned explicitly. Research suggests (DeKeyser, 1994; Krashen, 1981, 1982; Long, 2015; N. Ellis, 2005) only relatively simple and categorical linguistic rules can be learned and formalized as explicit knowledge. They also emphasized that complex rules can only be acquired through unconscious process which results in implicit knowledge. There have not been many studies that have tested these theories, but a few that have been completed (DeKeyser, 1994, 1995; Long, 2015; N. Ellis, 2005) seem to support the same claim.

R. Ellis (2005) developed three time-pressure instruments to measure implicit knowledge and compared the results with two untimed tests to assess explicit knowledge. The results confirmed characteristics of either implicit or explicit knowledge. Similar findings were replicated by other L2 researchers (Ercetin & Alptekin, 2013; Gutierrez, 2013; Zhang, 2015), and in recent years further refinement of characteristics has been proposed to better measure both explicit and implicit knowledge (Suzuki, 2017; Suzuki & DeKeyser, 2015; Vafae et al., 2017).

Interface Between Explicit and Implicit Knowledge

In second language acquisition, the interface position describes the various possible theoretical relationships in the mind of the learners between explicit and implicit knowledge. After Krashen (1981, 1982, 1985) proposed his monitor hypothesis insisting that there is no relationship between the explicit knowledge and tacit knowledge neither in first language or second language acquisition, there has been considerable interest in second language acquisition research to study the nature of the relationship between the conscious and unconscious knowledge. Table 2 provides a summary of the three interface positions put forward by R. Ellis (2005): the non-interface position, the strong-interface position and weak-interface position.

Table 2: Interface Positions

	Non-interface	Weak Interface	Strong Interface
Position	-Explicit & implicit are separate systems -Explicit system helps monitor performance -Implicit system subconsciously constitutes acquired competence	-Forms can be gradually and mostly subconsciously acquired through incidental noticing	-Explicitly learnt knowledge can be turned into automatic implicit subconscious knowledge through repeated encounters
Pedagogical implications in language teaching	-Focus on content based incidental and implicit learning with no overt focus on form	-Focus on meaning through task-based discovery learning format -draw incidental overt attention to forms	-Structure syllabus to focus on forms -Present and practice forms

Adapted from: R. Ellis, 2005

Non-interface Position. This position postulates that there is no interaction between the learned explicit knowledge and acquired implicit knowledge. According to Krashen's (1982) monitor hypothesis language learning consists of distinct learned system and acquired system, and they are devoid of each other. He argued that the learned system only serves to monitor the accuracy of what has been already acquired. For example, rules that were explicitly learned can assist in comparing and making changes to what has been produced implicitly. There is no connection between the learned competence and acquired competence in language. Over a period, learned explicit knowledge cannot influence implicit knowledge, and it cannot be turned into fast automatic language knowledge (Krashen, 1981, 1985). This non-interface viewpoint has been widely debated and discredited mainly due to its lack of falsifiability. The debate in recent years has focused on the strong and weak-interface positions.

Weak-Interface Position. In this position, it is argued that depending on various factors, explicit knowledge can directly facilitate the development of implicit knowledge (R. Ellis, 2005). Because of the variations arising from the learning factors, weak-interface is a way of categorizing not just one, but many positions that fall somewhere in the continuum between non-interface and strong-interface. N. Ellis' (1993, 1994) weak-interface model distinguishes between developmental and variation features of language. He concluded that explicit knowledge and formal instruction have a facilitating effect on implicit knowledge because they help to draw learner's attention to features in the input that would have been impossible without it.

Also, in N. Ellis' weak-interface model (1993, 1994b, 2005, 2011, 2015) and as argued in N. Ellis & Larsen-Freeman (2006), implicit knowledge is the most important for learning, but both implicit and explicit knowledge can work together cooperatively for any domain of learning. According to N. Ellis, in both output and input language processes "conscious and

unconscious processes are dynamically involved together in every cognitive task and in every learning episode” (2005, p. 340). N. Ellis maintained that we rely primarily on automatic processing; however, learners also draw upon explicit knowledge when automatic processes fail. This view is different from R. Ellis’ (2008) view because he argued that explicit knowledge cannot become implicit knowledge.

Strong-Interface Position. The central claim in strong-interface theory is that like any other domain of learning, language learning follows the same sequence from declarative knowledge to procedural knowledge, and finally to automatization of the procedural knowledge (DeKeyser, 2003, 2007a, 2007b, 2007c, 2009, 2015). By reducing error rates and reaction times with practice (Anderson, 2000), eventually, “fluent, spontaneous, largely effortless, and highly skilled behavior” (DeKeyser, 2007a, p. 97) can be achieved. It was argued that declarative knowledge and procedural knowledge operate along a continuum where the former can transition to the latter over time as a result of automatization (Anderson, 2000; DeKeyser, 1997; 1998, 2007b; Ullman, 2004).

DeKeyser (2003, 2009, 2015) argued that both automatized explicit knowledge and implicit knowledge can be accessed quickly. When explicit knowledge is accessed rapidly, time pressure during performance cannot necessarily limit access to explicit knowledge (DeKeyser, 2003, 2015; Suzuki & DeKeyser, 2017). Automatized explicit knowledge deployed rapidly and effortlessly can be acquired by first learning declarative knowledge and then developing procedural knowledge (DeKeyser, 2015; Lyster & Sato, 2013). Depending on how readily knowledge is available there can be different levels of automatization such as automatized explicit knowledge, less automatized explicit knowledge and non-automatized explicit knowledge. If the speed of access to knowledge differentiates explicit knowledge from implicit

knowledge, the end point of automatized explicit knowledge would theoretically be characterized by lack of awareness. However, researchers have rejected the idea that accumulating one type of knowledge would diminish the other type of knowledge, implying that automatized explicit knowledge cannot be converted to implicit knowledge (DeKeyser, 2009, 2015; N. Ellis, 2015; Hulstijn, 2002; Paradis, 2009).

Awareness and Sociocultural Theory

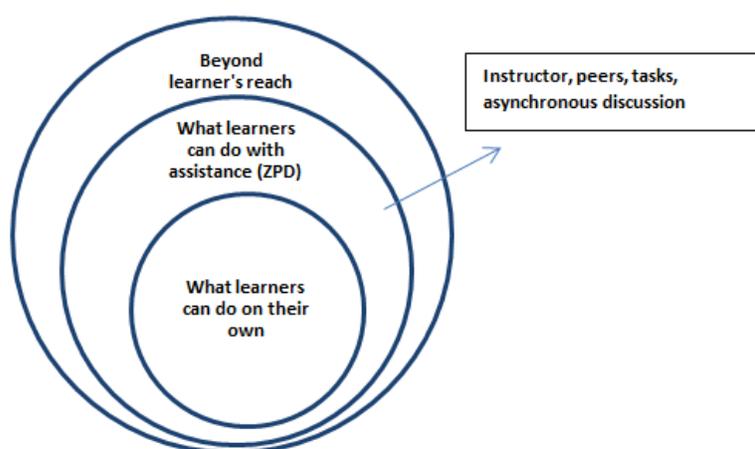
The primary goal of PELP is to facilitate communicative capacity in learners.

Communicative competency is the ability to understand and communicate messages effectively and appropriately in a particular social situation (CCLB, 2015). The process of achieving communicative capacity is dynamic, interpersonal, and relative as opposed to being merely static, intrapersonal, and absolute (Bachman & Palmer, 1996; Canale & Swain, 2013; Savignon, 2007; Skehan, 2016). The TBLT curriculum as practiced in PELP has integrated principles of Socio-Cultural Theory (SCT) to achieve the learning goals. SCT draws on the works of Vygotsky (1987) and Wetsch (1998), among others. Vygotsky emphasized that language learning is a mental phenomenon mediated in social and cultural contexts, and he advocated that social interaction is necessary for language learning. Through social interactions, new forms and functions are first produced, and subsequently they become internalized. Thus, the key tenets of sociocultural second language acquisition are based on the theoretical perspective that learning occurs both inter-mentally and intra-mentally (R. Ellis, 2008). The most distinguishing concept of sociocultural theory is that higher forms of mental activity are mediated (Lantolf, 2000; Lantolf, et al, 2018). Internal mediation is achieved through external mediation. This mediation can involve mediation by others in social interaction, mediation by self through private speech, and mediation by artefacts such as tasks and technology.

Vygotsky (1987) used the metaphor of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) to explain the psychological dimension of learning. As explained by Vygotsky, ZPD is the difference between an individual's actual and potential levels of development. An individual's actual level is the skills that the individual has already mastered. The potential level is the skills that the individual can perform when assisted by another person or the knowledgeable other. Learned skills serve as the precursor for the performance of new skills. Studies have found that L2 learners can use language as a tool to mediate their thinking, and that talking about the language can mediate L2 learning and development (Ammar & Hassan, 2017; Swain & Watanabe, 2012).

Scaffolding is a metaphor used for Vygotsky's (1987) concept of ZPD (Mahan, 2020; Smagorinsky 2018; Verenikina, 2004), and it has been effectively used in second language learning to help learners (Gibbons 2015; van de Pol et al., 2010, 2015). Scaffolding consists of the role of the teachers and others in supporting the development of learners and the support system required to advance to the next stage or level. Figure 1 depicts the Zone of Proximal Development and scaffolding efforts in learner centered TBLT curriculum such as the PELP.

Figure 1: ZPD and Scaffolding in PELP



Adapted from: <https://www.simplypsychology.org>

In recent years ‘scaffolding’ is used as an umbrella term encompassing various forms of teacher intervention (Alexakos, 2015; Diaz, 2013), and researchers agree that the role of scaffolding is to help learners to achieve autonomy (van de Pol et al., 2010) by tailoring support from a teacher and more capable peers for individual and specific group of learners, and then gradually transferring the responsibility of learning to the learner (Niu et al., 2018). Scaffolding efforts can range from a macro level that begins with curriculum planning to determine what teachers should do or should not do (Gibbons, 2015; Johnson & Lock, 2018; Masako & Hiroko, 2008) to micro level minute-to-minute interactional support teachers provide in the classroom (van Lier, 2004).

Scaffolding emphasizes the need for making learning more effective by encouraging active participation from learners whereby they take a greater degree of control over their own learning. Van de Pol et al. (2010) proposed a three-dimensional strategy for scaffolding to be effective: contingency, fading and transfer of responsibility. Contingency refers to the responsiveness the teachers show to adapt to the current level of the learner’s performance (van de Pol et al., 2015). Many researchers have emphasized the importance of learner diagnosis in facilitating scaffolding (Lajoie, 2005; Macrine & Sabbatino, 2008; Shepard 2005; van de Pol et al., 2012). Based on the diagnosis, teachers can use scaffolding techniques such as modeling (Johnson & Lock, 2018) to make learners familiar and comfortable with the content. Van de Pol et al. (2015) found that the effectiveness of scaffolding depended on variables such as the duration of independent working time students had and students’ task effort.

Fading is another characteristic of effective scaffolding identified by van de Pol et al. (2010). It refers to the gradual withdrawal of the scaffolding through the fading away of the teacher depending on the development and competence of the learners. While untimely fading of

support can hamper learner uptake, timely fading was found to be the most effective way to foster student uptake of teacher's support (van de Pol et al., 2018).

The third characteristic, namely the transfer of responsibility is about gradually transferring the responsibility for learning to the learners themselves. When transferring the responsibility, scaffolding strategies should consider the cognitive or metacognitive and affective state of the learners and their ability to take increasing control over their own learning. Through these stages, scaffolding provides supportive and conducive learning environment where learners become more responsible and accountable to their own learning, and the teachers fade into the role of a mentor and facilitator of knowledge rather than the dominant expert in the class (Maloch, 2002; Myhill & Warren, 2005; Nathan & Kim, 2009; Oh, 2005; Reigosa & Jimenez-Alexandre, 2007).

Inter-mental and Intra-mental Context in PELP

Vygotsky (1978) stated that thinking originates in social context and that social interactions are critical for developing higher order thinking skills. He also contended that higher cognitive development can only be fully understood by considering the social and historical context within which it is embedded. Scott & Palincsar (2013) posited that learners adopt socially shared experiences and acquire useful strategies and knowledge by working with others on a variety of meaningful tasks. Through this process of guided participation, transformation of participation in a sociocultural activity takes place as opposed to transmission of discrete cultural knowledge (Matusov, 2015).

When discussing socio cultural theory in the context of L2 learning, it is important to consider learner background to fully understand the intra-mental and inter-mental activities. All the students who participated in this study were from the 'east' and engaged in 'western' critical

thinking approach to education. The term ‘west’ is used in this paper to include Europe, North America, Australia and New Zealand, and the term ‘east’ includes cultures outside these regions as referring to traditions of thought and practice and the historical trajectory. These terms are used as umbrella terms only and the difficulties in monolithically describing cultures as ‘eastern’ and ‘western’ has been acknowledged. Diversity does exist within and across cultures.

According to sociocultural perspectives, L2 learners’ performance is influenced by their beliefs about second language learning (Aragão, 2011; Barcelos, 2003b; Daniels & Tse, 2020; Ngo, 2018; Peng, 2011; Yang & Kim, 2011). Learner beliefs are dynamic, contextual, discursively constructed through negotiation and associated with their self-concepts and emotions. Their involvement in the classroom, the activities they participate in, and the way they organize their learning are all shaped by their beliefs (Yoshida, 2013). Within sociocultural framework, these beliefs are a specific type of cultural artefact and mediational tools used during language learning process (Alanen, 2003). Therefore, in the process of learning, they appropriate their beliefs as mediational tools (Daniels & Tse, 2020; Navarro & Thornton, 2011; Ngo, 2018; Yang & Kim, 2011).

In the context of the current study, it is important to note that there are cultural differences in the ways in which people in the East and the West perceive reality and process data. Resultantly, there are concerns relating to the ‘East and West schism’ when discussing L2 learning (Kumar, 2013). Roessingh (2004) provided an account of the key differences in the context of L2 learning. In the West, education is considered a cultural necessity for developing a stable society. It is generally perceived that Western education emphasizes on understanding (meaningful learning), and they value independent learning and critical thinking within a constructivist framework. In learner-centered classrooms, learning is driven by ongoing communication

between the students and the teacher. The constant flow of dialogue through collaborative, co-operative group work centered on projects stimulates both problem-solving and communication skills. Students are even encouraged to challenge ideas. Mistakes are treated in a positive manner, so the students are not afraid of making mistakes. They know they can learn from mistakes. There is great emphasis on understanding the concepts and materials, and on evaluating critically through open discussion. Students are also complemented when they perform well. The individual is the sole entity for inquiry, discovery and success.

On the other hand, Roessingh (2004) pointed out that Eastern education has a focus on memorizing (rote learning), so passive learning and strict conformity to rules is a more acceptable method. Since there is no interaction in the class, the students are on the receiving end. In didactic classrooms, it is the responsibility of the teacher to decide what knowledge to 'transmit' and to what extent the students can learn. Education is highly competitive, so there is emphasis on examination and grades. Criticism is used to encourage students to do better. Every student is considered equal, and everyone is given equal opportunity irrespective of individual differences. Sheer effort and discipline are imperative to do exceptionally well in schools. Driven by a sense of the collective, students in Eastern countries try to amass knowledge and apply these acquired learnings to improve their societies. Due to the focus on reproducing information, they may lack analytical and critical thinking required in Western classrooms (Rao, 2017).

These differences can have profound effects on the inter-mental and intra-mental activities when learners from one culture are exposed to another. For example, Chee et al. (2011) researched if cultural biases were inherent in the cognitive processes of East Asians (processing holistically) and Westerners (analytically) through differences in their brain structure. The

variations they noticed suggest that these are due to social orientations, ethnicity, cultural differences (external), linguistics, genetics (internal) and other influences.

Similarly, in a UK study of international students, Durkin (2008) found that most of the students opt for a ‘middle way’ which synergizes their own cultural approach to critical thinking with those aspects of western-style critical thinking and debate that are culturally acceptable to them. Many reject acculturations and instead choose a middle way which synchronizes culturally accepted elements from own and western culture. Similarly, international students were found to adopt a hybridization and creation of a ‘third space’ by comparing and blending new approaches to learning with their previous experiences and existing practices (Burnapp, 2006) rather than complete acculturation. As Burnapp points out, some students might choose to create their own new space in the new environment instead of completely assimilating to the dominant culture. In this new space they can explore and evolve possibly through interaction with international students with similar background or with insiders from the dominant culture. This involves hybridization and reflection on experience. Eventually, with experience, international students may understand and value the new practices, seeing them as opportunities for growth and development, without becoming fully acculturated (Durkin, 2008).

When language learners from Eastern didactic learning environments try to adjust to Western classrooms that encourage critical thinking and independent learning in a constructivist approach, it is important to understand how L2 learners self regulate their learning. As a multidimensional construct in education, self-regulated learning (SRL) emphasizes the active role of the learner in constructing knowledge whereby they become responsible by regulating their own learning and performance (Efklides, 2011; Zimmerman, 2008). Self-regulated learners are proactive in utilizing a variety of cognitive as well as metacognitive, motivational and

behavioral strategies (Zimmerman, 2001), and they incorporate self-regulation processes with task strategies and self-motivational beliefs (Cleary & Zimmerman, 2004). SLR includes a broad set of indicators such as organization, elaboration and self-evaluation (Mega et al, 2014), and learners are aware of the task requirements and what strategies they need for optimal learning experience (McCann & Garcia, 1999).

Studies have shown language learners who have high SRL skills perform better academically than those who have low SRL skills (Gunning & Oxford, 2014; Zimmerman, 2002). Seker (2016) investigated the use of three components of SRL by undergraduate foreign language learners namely orientation, performance, and evaluation. Participants reported only moderate to low levels of SRL use, but it was found to be a significant predictor of foreign language achievement and had significant correlations with language achievement. Wang and Chen (2020) found that self-regulated language learners used YouTube to explore more learning resources and to explore cultural knowledge. Other studies (Andrade & Evans, 2013; Ma & Oxford, 2014) have reported deeper learning and higher performance in L2 settings.

Online Community of Inquiry as Mediation Tool in SCT

Mediation in SCT can also involve artefact such as technology (Lantolf, 2000; Lantolf et al, 2018). ATESL (2011) recommended the integration of technology in language teaching to encourage learners to explore and create language as well as to use language to explore ideas, solve problems, develop new skills, and negotiate and communicate with an expanded audience. Community of Inquiry (CoI) is a theoretical framework developed by Garrison et al. (2000) that can help educational researchers to design and analyze the nature and quality of critical discourse and reflection in digital learning environments with a focus on learning communities and social activities. This framework can provide detailed descriptions of user interactions and higher-order

learning (Garrison et al., 2005) in collaborative and constructivist-oriented processes in virtual text-based environments. The premise for this framework is that the creation of a critical community of inquiry is an essential context for higher-order thinking – the ostensible goal of higher education in general. It is in such a community that the (re)construction of experience and knowledge through the critical analysis of subject matter, questioning, and challenging of assumptions takes place (Dewey, 1938). The CoI framework helps to understand the quality of interactions, perceptions, and outputs of the participants in this learning community, and it includes three overlapping and interdependent elements namely cognitive presence, teaching presence and social presence.

Cognitive Presence. CoI framework suggests that cognitive presence can be created and supported in online learning environment with adequate teaching and social presence. The term Cognitive Presence (CP) within the framework of community of inquiry is defined as *“the extent to which the participants in any particular configuration of a community of inquiry are able to construct meaning through sustained communication”* (Garrison et al., 2000, p.3). As evident from this definition, CoI is grounded in the critical thinking literature and operationalized by the practical inquiry model. CoI framework operationalizes cognitive presence for the purpose of developing a tool to assess critical thinking and reflection (Garrison et al., 2001), and it is focused on the outcome of the investigation through an ongoing argument that affects the entire virtual community. Cognitive presence is at the center of the constructivist learning process. The focus is on higher order thinking and not individual learning outcomes.

According to Li (2016) critical thinking skills are the foundation of academic success in higher education. Critical thinking involves “skilled and active interpretation and evaluation of observations and communications, information and argumentation” (Fisher & Scriven, 1997, p.

21). Bloom's revised taxonomy (2001) involves six hierarchical cognitive domains used by learners to acquire, retain, and use new information: remembering, understanding, applying, analyzing, evaluating, and creating. The premise for this hierarchy is that students must first apply the lower levels of learning such as recall and comprehension to achieve higher-order levels of learning such as synthesis and evaluation.

Bloom's taxonomy was originally developed for curriculum design and development, but they are also nowadays used to assess students' critical thinking skills (Zaidi et al, 2018).

According to Lipman (2003) the processes of thinking and judgment in critical thinking should be based on certain criteria. It is important to note that in rubric based TBLT curriculum such as the PELP, learners get training in developing critical thinking skills as they are continually required to refer to the rubric criteria to meet the task requirements. The evaluation process they go through cannot be arbitrary, but orderly and consistent based on specific criteria. As Watson and Glaser (2012) points out, critical thinking skills assist learners to identify, analyze and evaluate what is necessary to achieve accurate results. Research shows that language development and critical judgement are interrelated and interdependent (e.g., DeWaelche, 2015; Ghonsooly & Ghanizadeh, 2013; Hashemi & Ghanizadeh, 2012). Rao (2007) and Chen (2012) reported production of more critical ideas in L2 classes after training learners in critical thinking skills. Similarly, it was found that by teaching higher order critical thinking skills such as applying, analyzing, evaluating, and creating, students improved their performance in speaking and writing tasks (Yaprak & Kaya, 2020; Zhang, 2018).

Critical thinking is not only a process but also an outcome. The outcome can be best understood from how well the individual acquires deep and meaningful understanding and content-specific critical inquiry abilities, skills, and disposition (Garrison et al., 2005). In

educational settings, critical thinking as a product can be indirectly judged through purposefully constructed assignments. However, judging critical thinking as a process is challenging, so to assess the nature and quality of cognitive presence, Garrison et al. (2000; 2001) constructed a practical inquiry framework grounded in experience as proposed by Dewey (1938). This experience which is the shared world of the learner also includes imagination and reflection representing the private world that leads back to experience and practice. There are two dimensions to this framework of cognitive presence. The first dimension reflects the continuum between action and deliberation while the second one represents the transition between the concrete and abstract worlds. Cognitive presence in CoI as framed by Garrison et al. (2000; 2001) includes four phases: (1) triggering event (2) exploration (3) integration and (4) resolution. Each of these phases is described in detail in Chapter III.

Teaching Presence. The second element in the Community of Inquiry that helps to improve, understand, and assess the quality of asynchronous text-based learning is Teaching Presence. Teaching presence within the framework of community of inquiry is defined as *“the design, facilitation, and direction of cognitive and social processes to support meaningful and educational worthwhile learning”* (Anderson et al., 2001, p. 5). The element of teaching presence is a means to an end to support and enhance social and cognitive presence for the purpose of realizing educational outcomes. It is the element in CoI framework that is most directly under the control of the teacher, and the three categories that illustrate the multifaceted components of teaching and learning are design and organization, facilitating discourse, and direct instruction. These categories are described in detail in Chapter III.

Social Presence. Critical thinking is the goal of any educational experience, and this is facilitated by the teaching presence in the community of inquiry framework. However, in an

online learning environment a third element named social presence (SP) is essential to share ideas, to bring about connectedness, to express views and to collaborate. The term Social Presence within the framework of community of inquiry is defined as the element that *“facilitates achieving cognitive objectives by instigating, sustaining, and supporting critical thinking in a community of learners”* (Garrison & Anderson, 2005, p. 67). In other words, it is the ability of learners to feel affectively connected with peers as well as the ability to perceive their personality through computer-mediated communication (Garrison et. al., 2000; Swan & Ice, 2010). Garrison et al. (2000) found that through the affordances of technology in asynchronous environment, learners could project themselves socially and emotionally and engage in meaningful critical thinking through collaboration channels.

However, it is important to note that in online group communication, cues that help structure interaction is minimal, so the communication relies heavily on explicit linguistic devices (Broadwell et al., 2013). Like the other two elements, Garrison et al. (2000) provided a template for assessing social presence in text-based virtual learning environment which includes three broad categories of communicative responses: affective responses, interactive responses and cohesive responses. Garrison et al. (2000) also included several indicators for each of the three categories in the element of Social Presence. For example, the indicators for affective category are expressions of emotions, use of humor and self-disclosure. Expression of emotions in text-based interaction could include repetitions, punctuation, conspicuous capitalization, emoticons etc. Participants may express humor by teasing, cajoling, irony, understatement, or sarcasm. Self-disclosure is another indicator whereby participants might present details about life outside of class or express vulnerability. The second category of social presence include indicators such as continuing a thread, quoting from others’ messages, referring explicitly to

others' messages, asking questions, complimenting, expressing appreciation, and expressing agreement. The third and final category of social presence includes vocatives, group inclusive expressions, phatic and salutations.

CoI framework is one of the most extensively used framework (Castellanos-Reyes, 2020; Jan et al., 2019; Richardson et al., 2017; Stenbom, 2018), and it has become a powerful guideline for educators to make informed decisions about online learning (Stenbom et al., 2012; York & Richardson 2012; Zydney et al., 2012b). Garrison and Arbaugh (2007) argued that designing courses by including the three interdependent elements positively influence student satisfaction, perceived learning, and sense of community. In a retrospective summary of the evolution of CoI framework since they first proposed this model, Garrison et al. (2010a) found that online learners were not achieving high levels of critical thinking because of the way online courses are designed. They also concluded that the social presence changes as the courses progress. As opposed to group cohesion demonstrated towards the end of the course, open communication and affective expressions are more important at the beginning of the course (Akyol & Garrison, 2008). They also reiterated the significance of teacher presence on creating the other two elements namely social presence and cognitive presence.

Also, researchers have found CoI framework very effective in providing clear structure to identify student engagement (Choo et al., 2019) as well as analyzing discourse in virtual learning environments (Diaz et al., 2010; Shea et al., 2010; Tirado Morueta et al., 2016). In a comprehensive review of how researchers have been using this framework, Stenbon (2018) lists the important ones as (1) exploring a single learning environment, (2) examining differences using the CoI, (3) observing relationship between different elements of CoI, and (4) using the

reliability and validity of data using the CoI survey. It was also found that CP and SP perceptions can be predicted by TP scores (Garrison et al., 2010b; Lin et al., 2015).

There have also been criticisms about the CoI framework. One of the arguments has been that the three elements – CP, SP and TP – are not adequate to capture the whole picture of interaction in the community of inquiry. For example, Shea et al. (2010) recommended adding a learner presence component to the existing three elements. They think the CoI framework does not adequately explain effective learner behavior in fully online courses. They argued that learning presence is evident in more complex learning activities that promote collaboration and correlated with course grades. Cleveland-Innes and Campbell (2012) suggested adding emotional presence and Lam (2015) argued autonomy presence was missing. In addition, Rourke and Kanuka (2009) found that students did not achieve expected goals in learning when using CoI. Finally, Akyol et al. (2009) criticized that the framework does not assess the learning outcome; it only informs about the teaching and learning process. Other researchers have made recommendations for diversification and replication of the framework outside higher education (Castellanos-Reyes, 2020) to include its use in K-12 (Harrell & Wendtm, 2019), industry (Bage, 2018) and blended learning environment (Duncan & Barnett, 2009).

Peer Feedback to Promote Inter-Mental and Intra-Mental Activities

The goal of every form of feedback, whether it is teacher feedback or peer feedback, is essentially to help students improve. Peer feedback is a communication process through which learners engage in reflective criticism and enter dialogues related to performance and standards of other students' work (Liu & Carless, 2006). Feedback is crucial for language learners to attain high levels of proficiency in the target language (Nassaji & Fotos, 2004) because awareness at the level of noticing is necessary for learning, and awareness at the level of understanding fosters

deeper and more rapid learning (R. Ellis, 2008). Besides, peer feedback involves collaborative tasks that provide opportunities for learners to externalize their knowledge allowing them to reflect on it, revise it, and apply it (Zhang & McEneaney, 2019), and thereby enhance language awareness (Sato & Ballinger, 2012).

Peer Feedback on Writing. One of the paramount advantages to peer feedback in language learning is that learning dimension is enhanced and supported by the students' active engagement in articulating the evolving understanding of subject matter. Dressler et al., (2019) found that in their study the undergraduate students integrated ideas from peer and instructor feedback in their writing approximately 85% of the time. A study by Duijnhouwer et al. (2012) found that feedback providing improvement strategies positively predicted students' writing motivation, process, and performance. In another comparative study of teacher-written feedback and collaborative negotiated feedback, Marzban and Sarjami (2014) found that the participants who were exposed to the latter outperformed the former in essay and paragraph organization. Also, Yang (2015) who investigated how graduate students construct knowledge through peer interaction in computer-supported collaborative environment found improvement in their summary writing skills particularly through observation of peer's writing process and by revising own summaries. Similarly, timely and accessible peer feedback intervention was successful in providing feedback that drew learners into deeper learning approaches (Tregrove, 2017). These findings support the constructivist approach that learning is creation of knowledge by interacting with the surrounding environment.

Moreover, peer feedback is beneficial in that the learners get the opportunity to judge their own work objectively. While providing feedback, the students focus on the positive and negative aspects of their peer's work. Learners become aware of their mistakes by receiving feedback

from teacher, and thereby enhance their writing capacities (Boubekeur, 2015; Wigglesworth & Storch, 2012). Also, it was found that writing could be improved to the expected level by using coded feedback at the editing stage of writing process (Ferris, 2011; Siswanti, 2014). Moreover, Zhao's (2010) study provided opportunities for university level EFL learners to use instructor and peer feedback. The results showed that although the participants used instructor feedback more than their peers, they also valued peer feedback. The results from Tai et al.'s (2015) study revealed that the students who received teacher feedback and peer feedback demonstrated greater improvements than those who received only teacher feedback in terms of holistic writing skills and the subscales of content, organization, grammar, mechanics, and style.

Finally, peer feedback helps develop transferable social skills such as criticizing, accepting, justifying one's position, rejecting and giving suggestions (Topping, 2009). In fact, this is the primary objective of communicative language teaching. Ishii (2009) employed a collaborative dialogic approach where pairs of students had to discuss and work through several form-focused tasks using metalinguistic terms. The quasi-experimental investigation aimed at raising language awareness of ESL learners enrolled in pre-university language course, and suggested proficiency may have moderate effect on learners' ability to discuss the grammaticality of target forms.

However, there might be issues with reliability when students engage in peer feedback. Students may not have adequate training in providing feedback, and there might be reluctance from students in providing feedback to peers because of fear (Stajduhar, 2013). Besides, participants in peer feedback might underestimate their own progress as a result of the feedback process since they may not be able to effectively compare progress with their expectations (Strobl, 2015). In addition, Weaver's (2006) study revealed that comments which were too

general or vague, lacked guidance, focused on the negative, or were unrelated to assessment criteria. Resultantly, they were not helpful to their peers.

There is also strong belief among students particularly from teacher-centered classroom environments that novice students are not qualified and knowledgeable enough to provide critical feedback (Zhang & McEneaney, 2019), so they recommend guidance sheets and rubrics to guide them through the process. For example, Rahimi (2013) noticed that trained students shifted attention to focus on global comments such as content, and organization of writing as opposed to untrained group who focused on formal errors. She recommends training learners in providing feedback. Finally, although students might strengthen their ability to detect diagnose and solve writing problems through peer feedback, the content of the feedback might be affected by reviewer ability. Patchan and Schunn (2015) found that low reviewers provided more praise than high reviewers whereas high reviewers provided more criticism than low reviewers. The criticism from high reviewers described more problems and offered more solutions, and it focused more often on high prose and substance. These results suggest that high reviewers and low reviewers may utilize different commenting styles, which could significantly impact the benefits of peer assessment. van Heerden and Bharuthram (2021) investigated how the level of peer familiarity might influence the process of peer review, and found that among peers who knew each other, there was better communication that valued honesty and trust. However, learners who did not know each other thought that anonymity allowed them to be more objective in their feedback.

Awareness and Task-Based Language Teaching

An approach that gained currency in SLA by focusing on learner autonomy is Task-Based Language Teaching (TBLT). It gained increasing momentum after the publication of “A

Framework for Task-Based Learning” by Willis (1996) encouraged by Prabhu’s (1990) Communicational Teaching Project in Bangalore. The basic premises of task-based instruction include (1) language learning is a complex process as opposed to a linear fashion (Long, 2015), (2) language forms are best learned when the focus is on meaning through exposure to target language (Prabhu, 1987, 1990), and (3) learners need the opportunities to use the language for real purpose relevant to the real world (Ahmadian & Mayo, 2019; Swain, 2013).

The essence of TBLT as in PELP is to develop communicative competency by completing tasks. A task can be understood as an activity carried out as a result of processing language (Long, 2015), an activity which requires learners to arrive at an outcome (Prabhu, 1987, 1990), a piece of classroom work which involves learners in comprehending, manipulating, producing, or interacting in the target language (Nunan, 2004), or a goal-oriented activity in which learners use language to achieve a real outcome (Willis, 1996). As suggested in the CLB Curriculum Guidelines (2008), tasks are practical applications and demonstrations of language abilities in the context of communication situations. In short, tasks help to acquire communicative competency which is the ability to understand and communicate messages effectively and appropriately in a particular social situation.

The strong links TBLT has to practical activities in the real world and its emphasis on social interaction situates this SLA approach in sociocultural theory. Concepts of SCT and cognitive-interactionist theory (Long, 2015) have been included in TBLT research (Eckerth, 2008; Foster & Ohta, 2005; Robinson, 2011). As discussed in the previous section, one of the key tenets of SCT is the role of mediation. Advocates of SCT argue that learning is a mental phenomenon; however, innate mental functions need to be mediated in social and cultural contexts for learning to occur. Mediation can occur in social interaction, by self through private speech, and by

artefacts such as tasks and technology (Lantolf & Poehner, 2014). In L2 learning as in TBLT, interactions help to produce new forms and functions that subsequently become internalized when learners gain control over them and as they are integrated into other processes. When facilitating the zones of proximal development, group and peer dynamics can have various facets. Guk and Kellogg (2007) found that teacher–class task interactions promoted mediation while student–student task interactions promoted internalization. Besides, Storch (2002) suggested that collaborative and expert–novice interactions were more effective than dominant–dominant and dominant–passive interactions for scaffolding and transferring knowledge. In addition to social mediation, individuals employ private language, languaging and gestures to self-mediate or self-regulate to develop more autonomous control of their learning (Frawley & Lantolf, 1985).

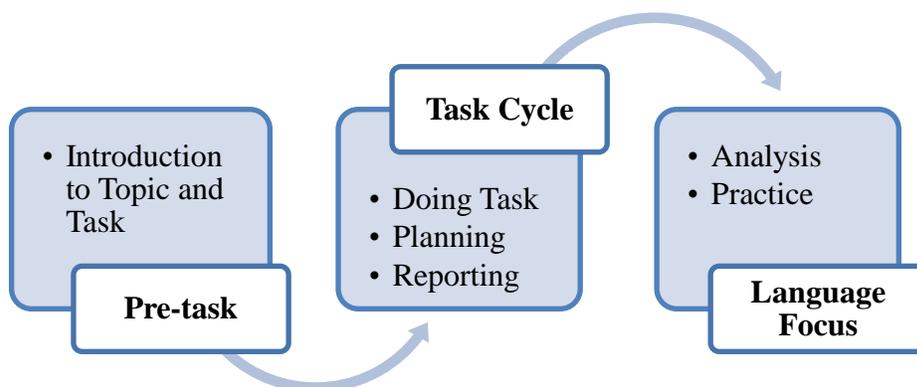
The role of mediation in SCT as advocated by Vygotsky (1986) highlights the importance of fostering declarative knowledge in formal schooling (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006). According to Feryok (2016) when compared to most proponents of TBLT, researchers in SCT advocate a greater role for the development of declarative language knowledge. Much more than mere internalization of concepts, declarative knowledge support learner’s capacity to self-regulate language performance. Although tasks provide opportunities for language use, TBLT approach can better support learners to mediate their ability to make meaning by providing high quality conceptual knowledge (Feryok, 2016). Feryok also recommends that concepts be linguistically sound, so language learners understand the roles of form, function, and use in making meaning in concrete situations. Such pedagogical and real-world tasks in language learning can also provide quality evidence of how learners internalize the concepts.

Schmidt (1993) proposed that target language forms will not be achieved unless they are noticed. To achieve this, salience of target language forms in input should be increased. Schmidt's noticing hypothesis provided rationale for a general reassessment of input-oriented approaches to language teaching. In order to raise awareness and thereby to enhance learning, some recommended types of tasks are closed communicative tasks that cannot be completed successfully unless the target grammatical knowledge is attended to tasks that contribute directly to the development of input processing (VanPatten, 2015b), and communicative grammar tasks that can raise the learner's consciousness about the grammatical properties of the L2 while simultaneously producing the kinds of interactional adjustments that are held to be facilitative of acquisition (Long, 2015).

In a learner centered PELP classroom, learners have diverse reasons for wanting to enhance their language skills, and the long and short-term goals of learners determine the direction of program planning and the integration of the tasks. The goal is to develop communicative competency whereby learners can create meaning in relevant contexts (Ahamadian & Maya, 2019; Avgousti, 2018; Elder et al., 2017). Therefore, the nine essential skills listed by Employment and Social Development Canada (2015) are applied in the tasks in the PELP curriculum and are rated by their complexity level. The complexity levels for four of the Essential Skills (Reading Text, Document Use, Writing and Oral Communication) have been aligned to the CLB. Elements drawn from the Essential Skills Profiles help develop classroom tasks that approximate real-life workplace tasks. Units and themes are integrated by using theme and unit content to develop contextualized tasks. This makes the language learning process dynamic, interpersonal, and relative (Swain, 2013; Savignon, 2007; Skehan, 2016) in a well-rounded language learning environment (Langdon & Pandor, 2020).

A methodological approach employed in the PELP program is the typical three-phase task cycle advocated by Willis (1996). As seen in Figure 2, in every class, learners go through three phases of task cycle that are further categorized into six stages.

Figure 2: TBLT Phases and Stages



The first phase is the pre-task that serves as an introduction to the topic and task. It may involve brainstorming, introduction of useful words and phrases, preparation time or listening to native speakers doing the task (Willis, 1996). The Task Cycle has three essential phases where the learners can demonstrate their expressive capacities. Learners begin by carrying out a communication task, using whatever language they already have, in pairs or groups. The emphasis is on spontaneity and fluency in making meaning rather than form (Leaver & Willis, 2004). The instructor monitors discreetly and does not correct errors. While helping students to formulate what they want to express, the teacher does not correct errors.

During the final phase which include task analysis and practice stages, learners first focus on form and ask questions about language features by looking at sample answers or responses provided by the teacher (Willis, 1996). Learners must focus on specific features of the sample and make comparisons with what they have produced. In the final practice stage, teacher conducts activities based on the analysis work or examples from the text or transcript. In brief,

TBLT is designed to help learners to use the language in real world outside the classroom, even if that language is grammatically inaccurate (Willis & Willis, 2007). The purpose of employing tasks is to create optimum conditions for learning to engage students' interest, and to stimulate target language use that include both receptive and productive skills (Leaver & Willis, 2004).

Raising Awareness Through Writing

As outlined in Canadian Language Benchmarks standards (CLB, 2013), communicative competence in a language is the ability to understand and communicate messages effectively and appropriately in a particular social situation. It requires an integration of grammatical, textual, functional, and sociolinguistic knowledge as well as strategic competence. In PELP, learners complete tasks, so they can develop and demonstrate language competencies that match CLB standards. A writer in Stage 2 (exit CLB 8) should be able to write clear, moderately complex texts on familiar concrete and some abstract topics within predictable, practical, and relevant contexts of daily social educational and work-related life experience (CCLB, 2013). For this, the writer needs expanded range of language such as concrete and abstract idiomatic and technical expressions, an expanded range of vocabulary, and the skills to compose formal, informal, personal and social messages (CCLB, 2013). The tasks require learners to write clear, moderately complex texts on familiar concrete and some abstract topics within predictable, practical, and relevant contexts of daily social educational and work-related life experience such as writing emails, letter, memos and reports.

Raising Awareness Through Task Assessment Rubrics

Task assessment rubrics are the criteria for assessment, and they outline the performance qualities with reference to the intended learning objectives (Andrade et al., 2010; Gezie et al., 2012; Mui et al., 2011; Reddy & Andrade, 2010). Rubrics in a well-designed curriculum can act

as a bridge connecting the content to be taught, learning, and assessment (Andrade, 2008; Brookhart, 2013; Ghaffar et al., 2020).

Rubrics are valuable tools in curriculum development, curriculum review and in planning teaching practice (Bharuthram, 2015). Rubrics can be used to graph program goals, and to make teaching and learning more focused (Brookhart & Chen, 2015; Cooper & Gargan, 2009; Lancaster, 2015). In the absence of clear rubrics, students might feel that there is a hidden curriculum that exists only in the instructor's mind (Deborah & Kimberly, 2006), so writing rubrics give students an insider's view of what makes writing work (Spandel, 2006; Ghaffar et al., 2020). One of the major advantages of using rubrics is that they can help teachers to focus on the criteria by which learning will be assessed (Brookhart, 2013). This can turn the teachers' attention to what students should learn as opposed to what they should teach, and thereby rubrics improve instruction. Brookhart argues that rubrics that focus on learning would bring clarity to the learning outcomes and help teachers to decide how much of various aspects of the content to teach. Besides, benchmarking of students' performance by using the rubrics allow teachers to review the effectiveness of their teaching strategies, and to adapt their teaching to student needs and learning pathways (Andrade, 2006; Mahmoud, 2020).

Rubrics can also help to coordinate instruction and assessment (Brookhart, 2013). Learning becomes cohesive when rubrics are designed to be repeated throughout a course. Brookhart suggests that rubric should be provided to the students at the beginning of a unit and should be used as a tool for them to "tackle the work, receive feedback, practice, revise or do another task, continue to practice, and ultimately receive a grade - all using the same rubric as their description of the criteria and the quality levels that will demonstrate learning" (p.12). When used in this manner, rubrics are learning tools for teachers to clearly communicate with the students the

requirements and expectations of learning (Quinlan, 2012; Stevens & Levi, 2013) through formative evaluation (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2014) and can support self-learning (Andrade, 2000; Brookhart & Chen, 2015). Besides, the use of rubrics is significant in language classrooms because it makes language assessments more reliable (Litz & Smith, 2004; Mahmoud, 2020).

In addition, rubrics can help students to review their strengths and weaknesses (Gibson, 2013; Panadero & Romero, 2014), to set their own goals (Sadler, 2009), and to gauge their learning process (Andrade & Du, 2005). The performance-level descriptions in the rubrics can help students to understand what is expected of them and what the task should look like (Brookhart, 2013). Haught et al. (2017) found that in graduate level courses rubrics are prevalent. Even without being explicitly taught about the rubrics, students were aware of the presence of rubrics in the course, and they considered rubrics as a mechanism to scaffold their performance. Several studies have shown that students who use rubrics to self-assess their work outperform those who do not use the rubrics through higher learning strategies (Andrade et al., 2010; Andrade et al., 2008; Koenig, 2016; Panadero & Romero, 2014).

In a quantitative comparative study Becker (2016) examined the effects of a rubric on the summary writing performance of adult ESL learners in the US by comparing four groups. One class of learners created a rubric, the second scored peer's writing using the rubric, the third viewed the rubric before the task and the fourth served as a control group. Results showed that the first two groups outperformed the latter two groups through involvement in rubric development and application. When rubrics are used in conjunction with assessment outcomes to provide feedback, student engagement improves (Ghaffar et al., 2020), and they are motivated to do better (Brookhart & Chen, 2015). Stevens and Levi (2013) suggested that teachers should

consider designing the rubrics jointly with the learners because it promotes learner-centered, empowering, and authentic assessment experience.

Researchers in the field have also reported contradicting views about achieving uniformity and consistency in framing task rubrics for language assessment. Spence (2010) weighed the strengths and weaknesses of using rubrics that influence teachers during assessments. She studied how using rubrics designed for native writers might contradict the reality if the same is used with non-native writers. She suggests that in school districts serving students who are English learners, assessment rubrics should be created specifically for them. This finding supports Escamilla and Coady's (2005) argument that assessment should consider students' home languages, and how this knowledge is used as they write in English. Moreover, Ene and Kosobucki (2016) found that institutionally mandated rubrics limit feedback to just the listed criteria depriving learners individualized comments in L2 writing.

In summary, it is evident that researchers support flexibility in interpreting the holistic rubrics for different contexts, but they all maintain the view that rubrics assist in setting congruence in learning outcomes, learner assessment and learner expectations.

Conceptual Framework

In this review of literature, the concept of awareness across three evolving and essential research fields that intersect the practice in PELP were examined: the theoretical principles underlying the role of raising awareness in SLA, the role of awareness according to SCT, and the role of awareness in TBLT. The review of literature on SLA revealed what adult immigrant and international language learners as in PELP need is to develop the communicative capacity which is the ability to use knowledge as a means of creating meaning in language in the relevant context of language use (Avgousti, 2018; Elder et al., 2017). The literature also emphasizes that

language learning can be optimized when the learning process is dynamic, interpersonal, and relative (Bachman & Palmer, 1996; Swain, 2013; Savignon, 2007; Skehan, 2016). Moreover, the review showed the facilitative role of automatized explicit knowledge on implicit knowledge and different levels of interface between them (DeKeyser, 2015; N. Ellis, 2015; R. Ellis, 2008; Hulstijn, 2015; Paradis, 2009; Kerz et al., 2017; Schmidt, 1995, Suzuki & DeKeyser, 2017).

The review of literature on SCT highlighted the significance of social and cultural interactions in language learning. It views learning as a mental phenomenon first mediated in social and cultural contexts, so social interaction is necessary for learning. In other words, learning occurs both inter-mentally and intra-mentally (Ahn, 2016; R. Ellis, 2008; Lantolf, 2000; Lantolf, & Beckett, 2009; Lantolf et al., 2018; Lantolf & Zhang, 2015; Leontiev, 2012; Wetsch, 1998; Vygotsky, 1987). SCT emphasizes the importance of creating zones of proximal development, the need for ongoing scaffolding efforts for effective language acquisition, and the availability of the knowledgeable other.

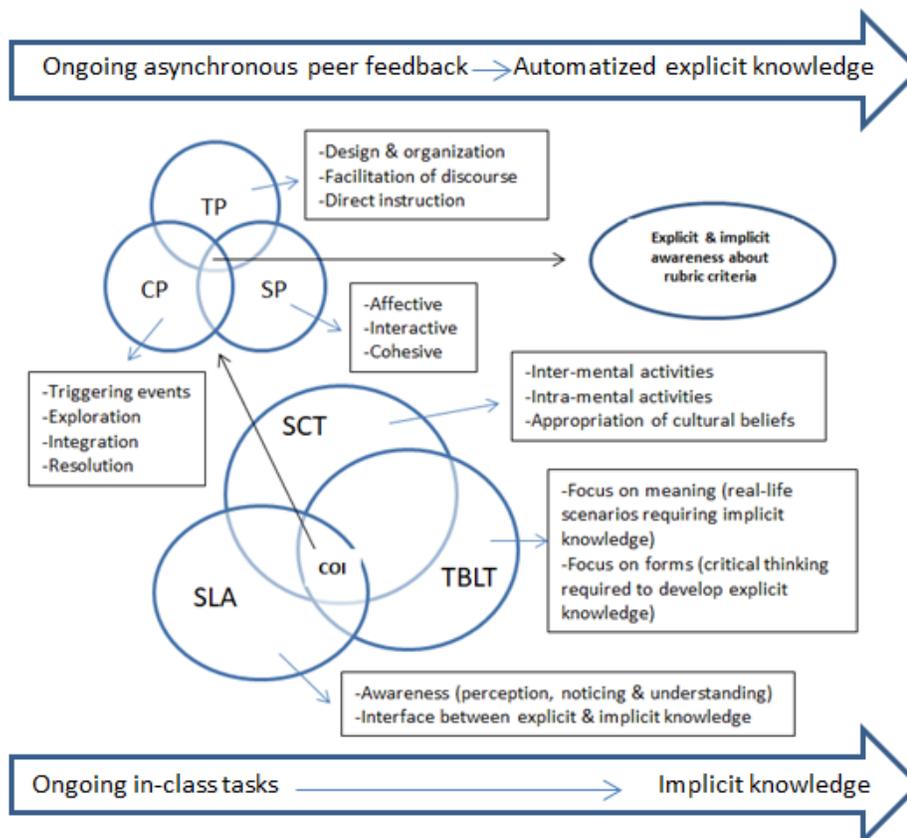
The review of literature on TBLT confirmed the phases and stages in this approach to completing tasks provide opportunities for learners to constantly switch between inter-mental and intra-mental activities as conceived in SCT to construct meaning and thereby to develop explicit and implicit knowledge. Tasks allow processing of language (Richards et al., 1985), and they require learners to arrive at real outcomes (Long, 2015) by comprehending, manipulating, producing, or interacting in the target language (Ahamadian & Maya, 2019; Nunan, 2004).

The review of literature invariably demonstrated that the impetus for language acquisition is awareness, and a favorable environment for developing awareness is where appropriate levels of cognitive, teaching and social presence coexist. These three overlapping and interdependent elements are the same conceptualized in the CoI framework (Castellanos-Reyes, 2020; Garrison

et al., 2000). Therefore, to raise awareness about task assessment rubric criteria in this study, the elements and categories in the CoI framework were used to frame the territory investigated (Miles et al., 2014) and to effectively design and analyze the nature and quality of critical discourse and reflection (Garrison et al., 2010; Stenbom, 2018). Since the CoI framework was not specifically designed for raising awareness about rubric criteria for second language acquisition, the measures adopted in this study were constantly informed by literature on SLA, SCT and TBLT.

When conceptualizing this study, the range of well-designed, graded, and organized tasks (Roessingh, 2014) in dynamic and strategic interaction scenarios (Compernelle, 2014a, 2014b) in the PELP curriculum was considered scaffolding efforts (Echevarría et al., 2017; Gibbons, 2015; Masako & Hiroko, 2008). It was thought that the series of tasks could create appropriate zones of proximal development and that the graded tasks had the potential to accelerate (Paradis, 2009; Compernelle, 2014a) the internalization of patterns of meaning and patterns of language (Ahamadian & Maya, 2019). However, the literature suggested that task assessment rubrics are often not self-explanatory (Bharathuram, 2015; Gezie et al., 2012), and when learners are not involved in the development and application of rubric, their motivation and performance could be inhibited (Becker, 2016). At the same time, the literature review showed that it is the responsibility of a proactive instructor to continually assess the needs of individual learners, to identify the skilled peers, and to facilitate interactions for construction of ZPDs (Vygotsky, 1978). Figure 3 shows the conceptual framework that informed this study.

Figure 3: Conceptual Framework Informing the Study



When designing this action research, the asynchronous peer feedback component was added to the existing course to increase cognitive presence, teaching presence and social presence. It was thought the conceptual fluency brought about through online interaction would have positive impacts on academic discourse (Boz, 2014) in the class when completing the tasks. The asynchronous discussion forums would provide the platform for facilitation of ZPDs and the required scaffolding by the course instructor. It was assumed that the ongoing asynchronous peer feedback using the task assessment rubric criteria would result in automatization of explicit knowledge about the rubric criteria. Simultaneously, ongoing, sequenced, iterative problem-solving and communicative tasks in face-to-face class were expected to expand on, and feed into, a conceptual development (Compernelle & Henery, 2014).

It was also thought that improved social presence in asynchronous discussion forum would provide opportunities for learners to reconsider their beliefs. When adapting to western concepts of education that lays emphasis on critical thinking and understanding within a constructivist framework (Kumar, 2013; Roessingh, 2004), learner beliefs (Alannen, 2003; Wertsch, 1997) about writing and the rubric could be mediated through interaction with peers within the social and cultural contexts embedded in the daily writing tasks. It was thought that through a process of guided participation (Rogoff, 1990) that aligns with SCT and TBLT, transformation of participation in sociocultural learning activities as opposed to transmission of discrete cultural knowledge (Matusov, 2015) could be promoted. In this study, as learners completed the daily tasks and got accustomed to Canadian workplace culture, they could use beliefs as a mediational tool and appropriate (Wertsch, 1997) their new beliefs about writing and assessment rubrics. This appropriation was hypothesized to improve their interaction in class and online, which in turn would improve their awareness about rubric criteria as well as proficiency in writing. This repetitive communicative performance through tasks in turn was meant to be further reiteration of deeper explicit knowledge about task assessment rubric. Peer feedback in each of the nine discussion forums and the application of conceptual knowledge in writing tasks were built on and expanded on the previous ones, helping learners to move forward in their acquisition of explicit and implicit knowledge about writing. The role of task completion and simultaneous peer feedback was to set the stage for subsequent cycles of action that would create well-rounded language learning environment with focus on language form, meaning, use and inquiry skills (Langdon & Pandor, 2020)

The CoI framework (Garrison et al., 2000) provided detailed descriptions of user interactions and higher-order learning in collaborative and constructivist-oriented processes

(Castellanos-Reyes, 2020; Garrison et al., 2005). The three overlapping and interdependent elements namely cognitive presence, social presence and teaching presence in this framework helped to analyze and understand the quality of interactions, perceptions, and outputs of the participants (Choo et al., 2020) in the blended learning community (Harrel et al., 2019).

Summary

Having reviewed the literature, I found that researchers have largely focused on the benefits of using rubrics in various learning scenarios. There has been no study undertaken to improve competency in writing by raising awareness about holistic writing task assessment rubrics. Besides, there was no mention of post-secondary L2 programs with TBLT framework designed around single generic assignment rubrics that gauge teaching, learning and assessment. This study was considered an opportunity to fill the knowledge gap that exists regarding raising awareness about writing task assessment rubric in a rubric guided adult TBLT curriculum. The goal of this study was to raise awareness about the rubric through asynchronous peer interaction using writing task assessment rubric and to explore possible interface between explicit knowledge about rubric and implicit knowledge as evidenced in the improvement in writing competency in the tasks completed by the learners over time. An overview of the qualitative approach using action research is provided in Chapter III.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

In this chapter I describe the methodology chosen for the qualitative action research on raising awareness about writing task assessment rubric in adult language learners through asynchronous peer interactions in TBLT. The rationale for qualitative action research and the research design is also outlined. Also, I describe how the integration of Community of Inquiry (CoI) framework to analyze the cognitive process during text-based online discussion within sociocultural theoretical framework allowed for a deeper understanding of how adult language learners can be helped to raise awareness about rubric. In addition, I describe in detail the research setting, context, population, data collection methods, and analysis. In the final part, I include the ethical considerations, measures taken to establish trustworthiness, limitations, and delimitations in this study, and a concise summary.

This action research sought to raise awareness about the writing task assessment rubrics, so the following research questions were pursued.

RQ1: What is the nature of the awareness language learners have about writing task assessment rubric at the beginning of the TBLT course?

RQ2: What are the effects of using writing task assessment rubric in asynchronous peer feedback in an adult TBLT course?

Qualitative Research Design

The methodology chosen for this study is qualitative research because it focuses on naturally occurring, ordinary events in natural setting (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018; Miles et al., 2014). As a classroom practitioner and researcher, I was able to innovate and explore reality (Brydon-Miller et al., 2020) in close proximity to specific classroom situation where the learners experienced difficulty in using the writing task assessment rubrics. The influence of the local context was not

considered a problem but as an opportunity to understand latent and nonobvious issues that hindered the use of rubrics. Since I was part of the concrete and specific reality as a practitioner, and not just an outsider trying to collect only data, I was able to capture the complexity of truth nested in the specific context through in-person data collection for critical analysis of pedagogic practice (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018).

A qualitative approach was appropriate (Stake, 2010) in this study because my goal was to explain the phenomenon of raising awareness by relying on my own and my learners' experience and perceptions during the iterative action cycles. Action research is generally employed in constructivist paradigm. For the positivists, a single, verifiable, objective, and fixed reality already exists, and the researcher's primary concern is to discover it. On the contrary, constructivists believe in creating multiple realities that vary with the observer according to "cultural, historical, and socio-political context" (McNiff, 2013, p.39). For them knowledge is the "*meaning* people assign to what they observe" (Hinchey, p.23). Therefore, interpretivist researchers try to understand something in a specific context whereas the positivists try to prove universal facts. This study primarily focused on "designing strategies for improvement" (p.25) in local contexts, so it was a good fit within interpretive paradigm. It allows for the "knowledge of practice" (McNiff, 2013, p. 89) leading to construction of new multiple realities.

Another major reason for the choice of qualitative methodology is the flexibility it offers. Firstly, qualitative approach allowed the flexibility to collect data over a sustained period, to choose collection times and to choose appropriate methods as the study progressed (Miles et al., 2014). Besides, qualitative methodology assisted in facilitating interactivity between the researcher and the participants as the situation warranted, and thereby led to social construction of meaning. Raising awareness about rubrics as interpreted in this study involved the active

creation of mental structures and not mere passive internalization of information acquired from others or from the environment (Nathan & Sawyer, 2014). Another reason for the choice of qualitative research was the small sample size of twenty learners. In qualitative study, evidence is usually collected from small number of individuals, and the data is analyzed for themes to find larger meanings which lead to more depth than breadth of information (Creswell, 2015). The role of the researcher was to interpret the meaning in the specific social world around the participants (Miles et al., 2014). This kind of extracting and interpreting of meaning facilitated the ground for trusting the report and placed the claims of the report in the context of many other reports (Altheide & Johnson, 2011). In short, this study had a strong case for qualitative research as it helped me as a researcher to examine holistically the complexities of the sociocultural world as they were experienced, interpreted, and understood in the specific context and at a particular point of time (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016).

Practitioner Action Research

In this study, action research (AR) was deemed a suitable research design within the framework of qualitative approach to explore ways to increase awareness about task assessment rubric. According to Willis & Edwards (2014), action research is “a form of systematic investigation that typically involves attempts to solve practical problems in real world settings through the involvement of stakeholders who work or live in those settings” (p.19).

Action research can be traced back to the work of Lewin (1946) and Collier (1945) when they first coupled the evocative prefix ‘action’ with ‘research’ in both work and educational settings (Burgess & Newton, 2008; Carr, 2006; Hendricks, 2009; Mertler, 2009). While Lewin’s ground-breaking work mostly focused on critical approaches in research to set standards of practice in educational institutions, Collier’s interest was in participatory research to resolve

social, economic, and political injustices in the institutions (Burgess & Newton, 2008). In the decades that followed, Lewin's (1946) research structural requirement was experimented in a variety of educational and workplace settings that resulted in the evolution of a variety of distinguishable progeny of action research that could be applied in qualitative, quantitative, and mixed approaches (McNiff & Whitehead, 2011). The organizational structure in AR proposed by Lewin consisted of the iterative cycle of reflection, action, evaluation, and modification, and it remains influential even today (Kemmis et al., 2016; McNiff & Whitehead, 2011). Even when the application of action research experienced resurgence through attempts in participatory action research in the 1970's (Carr, 2006; Borda, 2013), the basic structure remained the same.

This project was designed as practitioner action research because it had the scope for both action and research for me as an instructor and investigator in my own language class. As Davis et al. (2008) suggested the goals of the research as well as the researcher came from the inside. Practitioners engage in action research for the purpose of professional or organizational development, and the results would ultimately lead to better teaching and learning (Creswell, 2015; Noffke & Somekh, 2009). According to Noffke and Somekh (2009), the learning from inquiry on practice can be collectively recycled into organizational and social context of teaching and learning. I employed practitioner action research to find practical solutions that would involve qualitative interpretive modes of inquiry data collection, and analysis. The emphasis in this practitioner action research was on what worked in real classrooms based on the interpretations that teachers and students made in real life situations (Kemmis, 2006) with an insider's perspectives (Kemmis, 2009). In other words, the complex nature of contemporary classrooms required holistic, contingent, and exploratory approaches to inquiry (Davis et al., 2008). In this study by reflecting on effective ways to create awareness about rubric criteria, I

was able to design and employ asynchronous peer feedback to help my learners write better. Moreover, I wanted to improve the situation (McNiff, 2013) by explaining and theorizing. In brief, I chose practitioner action research because it has a reciprocal relationship between ongoing inquiry and action. Although practitioner action research shares the general characteristics of action research conducted at workplace and in educational settings, in this paper the term “action research” is used to mean the specific classroom context of practitioner action research.

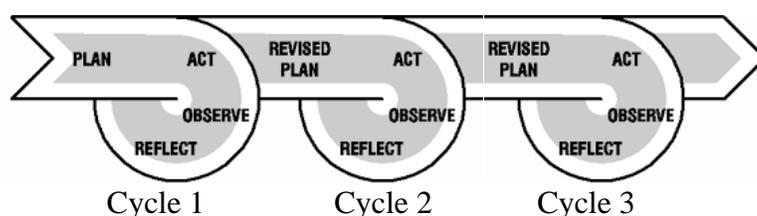
As far as ontology in action research is concerned, reality is viewed as dynamic and changeable by human agency (Nicholas & Hathcoat, 2014b). The goal of the researcher is to bring new realities into being through reification (Nicholas & Hathcoat, 2014b). This requires moral commitments from the part of the researcher, and the researcher’s desire to change reality is value laden (McNiff & Whitehead, 2011). Because action research is completed by engaging participants in real situations, the views held by the participants and researchers about each other will influence the outcome of the research (McNiff & Whitehead, 2011).

From an epistemological point of view in action research, knowing is problem focused, and it is tentative (Hathcoat & Nicholas, 2014a). Since knowledge is in a constant state of flux, knowledge is not always necessarily knowable (McNiff & Whitehead, 2011). Also, knowledge is created through a collaborative process (McNiff & Whitehead, 2011), so two imperatives to the purpose of action research are to improve and to involve (Carr, 2006).

Finally, AR is cyclical in nature and is an ongoing process (Hinchey, 2008; McNiff, 2013; Mertler, 2014) where researchers are always looking for the logical next step that is always obvious (Hinchey, 2008). Although educational action research can be classified as emancipatory, practical, or knowledge building (Burgess & Newton, 2008), as shown in Figure

4, they all have four iterative stages: (1) planning, (2) acting, (3) developing and (4) reflecting (Kemmis, 2006; Mertler, 2014; McNiff & Whitehead, 2011; Putman & Rock, 2017). These stages offer further perspective of AR to the researcher: (1) I experience a problem when some of my educational values are negated in my practice, (2) I imagine a solution to my problem, (3) I act in the direction of the solution, and (4) I evaluate the outcomes of my actions.

Figure 4: Cycles and Iterative Stages in Action Research



Adapted from: <http://www.leeds.ac.uk/educol/documents/3292g1.gif>

In this project, I considered multiple iterations of actions. Each of the three cycles of planned action with four stages helped to understand the context, to act on the issue, and to evaluate the effect of the action taken (Mertler, 2014; Stringer, 2014).

Benefits of Action Research. There are five major benefits to engaging in action research. Firstly, since AR aims to address an actual problem, the study will be of immediate benefits in the field (Putman & Rock, 2017; Stringer, 2014). Secondly, as a spiral of self-reflection (Kemmis, 2016), AR helps educational practitioners in self-development. Thirdly, even when AR is carried out by individuals, it involves collaboration from other stakeholders such as colleagues, students and administrators. This collaboration will lead to better learning environment (Putman & Rock, 2017; Schmuck, 2009). Fourthly, when the findings from AR are shared, they can be immediately used by the stakeholders (Creswell, 2015). Finally, researching and reflecting on practical issues related to one's own practices are essential components of

teaching and of learning in generating theory based on classroom practices as well as generating practices based on emergent theory (McAteer, 2013)

Limitations of Action Research. Iliev (2010) mentions four limitations of action research. Firstly, the physical limitations may include the problems with consistency in critical action and the problem with keeping attention during the entire research process. Secondly, the methodological limitations may include structuring of the instruments for data gathering, persistence of the ethical principles in realization of the action research, complete dependence on the participants for generation of the results and producing the system of knowledge based on the results of the research. Thirdly, AR is unsuited for people who are unwilling to work democratically, and it is difficult to meet the needs and expectations of everyone involved. Finally, the outcomes from AR study may not be always generalizable to other contexts.

Critique of Action Research. Action research as a methodology has a few flaws if the research design does not give due considerations. One of the criticisms is regarding subjectivity (Kock, 2004). It is possible for personal biases to affect the study as the researcher may over-involve in the context that is personal and familiar. According to Noffke and Somekh (2009), another disadvantage to this research methodology is that the researcher as an insider might be coerced to alter the findings by the organizational power structure to suit the findings to their advantages. Noffke (1997) also questioned the instrumental uses of action research when it is related to issues of power. She cautions that it is important to consider who and what is being developed in whose interest in the process. In addition, the fact that this methodology focuses on both action and research would place great demand on the learners. The emphasis of process over product in action research might cause discomfort and learners might have lack of understanding about what action research is and its purpose (Bryant & Bates, 2010).

Research Context

This action research was conducted in a post-secondary institute in an urban neighborhood in Western Canada. While focusing on developing language proficiency, PELP also attempts to address the challenges international and immigrant students confront in higher education. The courses have been designed for adult English language learners whose first language is not English. Most of the students entering the PELP program are international students or immigrants who have had traditional teacher-centered learning experience in their own countries. More than 80% percent of the international students in Canada are from Asia (CBIE, 2021). According to Statistics Canada (2019), more than 70% of the immigrants in recent years are of Asian heritage. The enrolment in PELP also shows a similar trend. Most of the students are from Asia, and a few are from Africa, Europe and South America. It is possible to have students from a dozen countries in a class of twenty-four. Although there is no age limit, a typical class would comprise of students mostly in their 20's and some in their 30's. Most of them would have completed high school in their own countries, and many would have completed college or university education as well. Several of them would have also worked in their field of education in their own country and might have survival jobs in Canada. Most of the students consider PELP program as a pathway into a career focused higher education in Canada.

There are five levels of PELP courses (CLB 4 through 8). Prospective students take a placement test, and based on their performance, they are enrolled in one of the five levels. There are two courses in each level: one that focuses on Reading and Writing strands and the other that focuses on Listening and Speaking. Learners can opt for part-time courses by taking any one course or choose full-time by attending both courses.

The PELP course chosen for this study had twenty-eight integrated lessons that covered four thematic units. Each day the students spent two hours in highly interactive class to complete a task and two hours online outside the class to complete assignments and homework. Most of the learners took both courses at the same time, so they typically spent four hours in the class and four hours outside to complete these intense courses. The topics and tasks were related to workplace communication with an overlapping goal of ‘learning to learn’ embedded across the courses and levels. Brightspace was used as an online platform for collaborative and interactive participation. As the course instructor I also used the Internet, PowerPoint, digital images, ELMO, digital audio recorders, videos etc. to facilitate TBLT classes.

Although either of the two classes could be chosen for this research, the decision to use Reading and Writing class to guide the action research was based on three reasons. First, I had noticed learners had challenges in meeting CLB expectations in writing than any other strand. Second, it would be easier for learners to apply automatized explicit knowledge in writing than speaking because it allows them time to think. Finally, from an execution point of view, collecting and analyzing written data would be less time consuming and manageable in a natural setting. The primary investigation tool was the asynchronous peer feedback added to this course for this study. To support students to think about the criteria in the tasks assessment rubric when completing the tasks, regular class time and assignments were used as concurrent opportunities to further draw learners’ attention to the rubric criteria.

Ethical Considerations

This study received ethics approval from Conjoint Faculties Research Ethics Board (CFREB) at the University of the Calgary and from the Research Ethics Board at the institution where the action research was conducted, and data was collected. By following the methods and

procedures outlined in this chapter, I ensured ethics was utmost priority throughout the study. In any research, it is vital to protect the participants (Marshall & Rossman, 2006), and it is very important not to force a procrustean system of ethics standards into unique and situated research (Cohen et al., 2007). They point out that “it is the combination of reason and a sense of rightness that researchers must keep faith with if they are to bring rich ethical quality to their work” (p.52). In every stage of this action research, it was important for me to consistently make rational decisions regarding informed consent, gaining access to research settings, non-maleficence, beneficence, absolutist and relativist ethics, matters of privacy, anonymity, confidentiality, betrayal, deception, and responsibilities to the research community (Cohen et al., 2007).

According to TCPS2 (2019), when participants are recruited by individuals in a position of authority, there is chance for undue influence and manipulation. Therefore, prior to commencing the research, I consulted and got written permission from the Institutional Research Information System Solution (IRISS) at the University of the Calgary and from the Research Ethics Board (REB) at the institution where the action research was conducted, and data was collected. I also got the permission to conduct the study and to publish the results. To minimize the influence of position of authority I sought free, informed, and ongoing consent from the student participants ahead of the research (Chabot et al., 2012; Creswell, 2015). Since this research was completed in additional language context where the participants had limited language ability particular attention was paid when getting the consent. Rather than looking at informed consent as a product of paperwork, it was robustly dealt with as a privileging process (Eaton, 2020). In the first week, the graduate supervisor visited the class and explained the purpose and scope of the research to all the students in my class, and they were provided with detailed information about the project in writing. The document clearly mentioned that participation was voluntary and

totally optional, and that they could withdraw anytime. It also mentioned that there would be no consequences if anyone chose not to participate. The language in the document was simplified, so every student clearly understood the message. A copy of the document was posted in the class and on the class website. The form included information about the project, the purpose of the study, and the nature of participation expected for the duration of the study (Hendricks, 2017). All consent forms were sealed and safely stored by the graduate supervisor until the end of the term. This was to ensure the participants' responses to the consent request remained unknown to me as an instructor and researcher to avoid favoritism and special attention based on the responses on the completed forms (Creswell, 2015).

I also ensured impartial treatment of every student. No grade was assigned to tasks students complete as part of this project. Also, I made sure that normal instructional hours were not used for this project so that students attending this credit course with pre-determined curriculum content and objectives would not be affected adversely. Participants interacted only online outside scheduled class time. All the participants by admission eligibility criteria attending this course were adults over the age of 18 and demonstrated no signs of impaired mental capacity. Hence, the risks to human subjects associated with this study were minimal.

As a qualitative researcher, I carefully considered confidentiality of the participants (Rossman & Rallis, 2010). Personal data was not collected for this study. I used pseudonyms throughout my journals and the report. I also locked up the hard and digital data safely at workplace. The files related to the project are stored on password protected workplace computer.

Population, Sampling and Recruitment

In this study I chose non-probability total sampling (Slavin, 2007) where the participants were selected from a naturally occurring group (McNiff, 2013). The results from convenience

sampling may not be generalizable due to environment, culture, and socio-economic factors (Blackstone, 2012). All the 22 students in my CLB 6 Reading and Writing class were informed about the opportunity to participate in this study, and the sampling pool was limited to the learners solicited for this study.

I chose CLB 6 class because I had been teaching this course for more than three years, and I had noticed that the students had difficulty following the writing task assessment rubric. I decided to carry out action research, so I can design strategies for improving what I had been doing to the benefit of my learners in my real classroom (McNiff, 2013). The participants could not only enhance the learning experience while participating in the project, but also in subsequent PELP and other post-secondary courses they would be attending. Moreover, when compared to lower-level learners, CLB 6 learners had adequate language ability to participate in online peer feedback on writing tasks. Finally, it was thought a modest beginning would most likely lead to more ambitious projects (Hinchey, 2008) because in this cyclical and ongoing process of AR, I was continuously looking for the logical next step. In this action research, I had considered multiple iterations of actions. The three cycles of action I implemented helped me to understand the context, to act on the issue, and to evaluate the effect of the action taken (Mertler, 2014; Stringer, 2014). If necessary, in a completely new cycle of iterations, I could continue my action for improvement with the same participants as they moved to CLB 7 class.

The action research component was introduced to prospective participants on the first day of class by distributing participant recruitment letter to each learner (Appendix A). Then, on the fourth day of class the principal investigator who was also the research supervisor for this study visited my class and spoke about the reasons for doing this research, expectations from participants, and possible outcomes. She provided details about the consent form (Appendix B)

that was collected from each participant prior to participating. For this study, 12 to 16 participants were considered adequate; however, everyone in the class expressed interest, and agreed to voluntarily consent to participate in the study, so the final number of participants was 22 CLB 6 learners. Two learners discontinued the course during the third cycle due to personal reasons, so data from the remaining 20 learners was considered in this study. These 20 participants were considered to have similar language proficiency at CLB 6 since they were either benchmarked through a placement test or they had completed a lower PELP course. Table 3 shows distribution of research participants according to four categories.

Table 3: Distribution of Research Participants According to Categories

Country of Origin	First Language	PELF Course Completed	Period of Stay in Canada
Argentina (1)	Arabic (4)	CLB 4 & 5 (14)	Less than one year (8)
Brazil (1)	Farsi (1)	CLB 5 (2)	1 to 2 years (4)
China (1)	Gujarati (1)	New to PELP (4)	2 to 3 years (3)
Columbia (1)	Hindi (1)		More than 3 years (5)
Egypt (1)	Korean (2)		
India (3)	Mandarin (1)		
Iran (1)	Mongolian (1)		
Mongolia (1)	Portuguese (1)		
Nicaragua (1)	Punjabi (1)		
South Korea (2)	Spanish (3)		
South Sudan (1)	Taiwanese (2)		
Syria (2)	Vietnamese (2)		
Taiwan (2)			
Vietnam (2)			

The sample population consisted of 20 learners from 14 countries, and they had 12 different first languages. Many of them were multilingual, and they used English as an additional language. More than half of the students were in their late teens or early twenties. 14 of them had attended CLB 4 and 5 courses and two of them had attended CLB 5 courses in the PELP program. This means they had been using TBLT approach to learning, and they were introduced

to rubrics at least for two to four months. Only four students were new to PELP and rubric based TBLT classes.

Based on the general demographics of the program and my own experience teaching the courses, this class had higher percentage of learners who had started their PELP courses in lower levels. Also, compared to international students, this class had a higher percentage of immigrant students than usual. All except three had either a part time or full-time job while attending full time PELP program. All of them wanted to take a post-secondary course in the same institution, and they also wanted to pursue their career in Canada. They considered PELP a pathway to their higher education and were completing the courses to meet the language proficiency expectations for admission to other programs.

Data Collection

The evidence of the impact of the action research (Kemmis et al., 2016) was gathered to understand my practice, to narrate how the participants did and to describe how the intervention changed the status-quo (Kemmis, 2006). I collected the evidence from: (a) the typed peer feedback posted by students on the online Discussion Forum in Brightspace, (b) selected writing tasks completed by students during the class, and (c) my own written observation notes and journaling. These three data sources are described below.

Asynchronous Discussion Posts

Online peer interaction using CLB writing task assessment rubric was an added component in this course. During the first two weeks, learners were given opportunity to post their tasks and to provide peer feedback on the course Discussion forum set up by the instructor on course website. Once learners became familiar and comfortable with interacting on the Discussion forum, they were put into groups of three or four in new forums each of the following weeks. It

was decided to have mixed ability groups during the first cycle, so they could be the 'knowledgeable other' (Vygotski, 1978) in helping each other to raise awareness about the rubric as well as in solving difficulties related to technology. During the second and third cycles, high-low, high-high and low-low pairings were also attempted. Although all the learners in this course were working towards CLB 6 reading and writing skills, it was evident early in the term that learners had a range of awareness about the rubric criteria within the same benchmark. Besides, some learners had awareness about certain criteria, but not all the five criteria. For example, some learners demonstrated some understanding of organization of ideas in an email, but they did not show awareness about the expectations regarding grammatical structures. There were six groups in total, and several threads and posts were created over the nine weeks.

In-class Writing Task

As usual, students completed their tasks in the class by writing responses to the prompts on papers (Appendix C). Each day, during the two-hour-long lesson, learners went through three phases of task cycle that can be further divided into six stages: pre-task, task, preparation to report, reporting, analysis, and practice. During the task phase, the learners had the opportunity to demonstrate their expressive capacities, so the emphasis was on fluency and spontaneity in meaning making. During the final phase which included task analysis and practice stages, learners focused on form and asked questions about language features by looking at sample answers or responses provided by the instructor. The focus was on accuracy. During the seven weeks of class, learners completed 28 workplace related tasks comprising of emails, letters, reports, outlines, memos, and summary paragraphs. They uploaded nine of these to the discussion forum for peers to read and provide feedback. The final task uploaded by each learner at the end of each cycle was collected for data analysis particularly for the resolution category under cognitive presence element in the CoI framework. If a student was absent a particular day,

the task that was completed closest to the day was collected to make sure every artifact collected was completed during the class within the action-cycle frame.

Observation Notes and Journaling

Observation is a conscious noticing and detailed examination of participants' behavior in a naturalistic setting (Cowie, 2009). Observation as an interpretative tool requires practice and rigor but helps to pay particular attention to things the researcher is interested in investigating in a natural setting (Burns, 2010; Cowie, 2009). Since I was observing an actual credit course in progress, I did not video tape the normal class in progress because being observed could cause visceral responses (Cowie, 2009). It was likely some learners, particularly the new ones, could feel intimidated when video-taping the lessons.

It was not difficult for me as a researcher to enter the field since I was observing my own class. However, I ensured contacts were made prior to the research and consent was sought. Measures were also adopted to make sure participants' consent remained unknown to me to avoid coercion. During the first three weeks, I observed whether learners referred to task assessment rubrics (Appendix D) during the pre-task, report planning and task reporting stages in the task cycle and note notes on in-class observation log (Appendix E). I walked around the class during these two stages and checked if the students referred to the task assessment rubrics. This rubric was handed out on the second day of class. A separate observation log (Appendix F) was used to keep track of what I observed in asynchronous peer feedback. Observation was accompanied by notetaking in pre-determined formatted journal logs (Appendix G). I made sure to write rich field notes of the classroom setting and the participants' actions. Since I was used to the PELP classroom routine, I had to ensure I did not take anything for granted.

For taking notes, the pages were divided into three columns. The left-hand column was for details about time and place, the middle one for the field notes and the third column for analytical memos and comments to be made after the observation was over. To collect a thick description, the logs a checklist that included dimensions such as space, actors, activities, objects, acts, events, time, goals, and feelings. One checklist was filled out during each lesson and followed up after each class. Observation and notetaking continued throughout the seven weeks of the course. The observation period was kept long enough to rule out novelty effects and to give both the teacher and students time to get used to the new routine (Slavin, 2007). Evidence using the checklist was collected throughout the intervention by the same instructor in the same manner as baseline data to reduce the chance of bias (Creswell, 2015).

Observation was followed up with daily journaling. Journaling is a powerful tool in action research (Kimmis et al., 2014), and it is a systematic approach to reflect on practice (Mills, 2014). Journaling is a valued method for qualitative data collection due to the richness, depth, and extension of the information that they provide (Jacelon & Imperio, 2005; Hayman et al., 2012), and it is a suitable tool to be considered in action research as a way of life rather than looking at it as a methodology to be applied (McNiff, 2013). Over the research period, it was thought the journal entries would help to capture my feelings and reactions to the situation as a researcher (Mulhall, 2003; Montgomery & Bailey, 2007), would illustrate my own change in thinking (Hinchey, 2008), and would complement other sources of evidence and render the study findings more attuned to reality and informative for practice. Throughout the seven weeks of the intensive blended course, I kept a reflective journal to capture events from my everyday professional life (Hinchey, 2008) as a language instructor and a researcher. I took notes on the changes in the language of discourse from self and others, about changes in activities, and

changes in relationship setting (Kemmis et al., 2016). I had clear expectations to minimize drawbacks of journaling (Hayman et al., 2012) and had two columns on my journal log: one reserved for summarizing the information from the observation sheets and the other for entering my thoughts and comments. However, starting in the second week I decided to write my journal notes on the back of the observation sheets daily and a more comprehensible one was typed up on a weekly basis. In this way, it was easier to make connections to what was being observed, and what actions needed to be taken in the next cycle of action research.

Design and Procedures Followed

After institutional approvals were granted, the study commenced at the start of the next available new term as the action research and data collection was planned for the entire duration of the seven-week long course. As mentioned earlier, the specific details about the research component in this course was communicated to the participants in the first week and a signed copy of informed consent form was collected from each participant prior to commencing the project.

This seven-week long action research was conducted in three iterative cycles of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting. Each cycle lasted two to three weeks, and in each cycle, learners provided feedback to peers on three tasks they completed in the class. In total, they had the opportunity to provide and receive feedback at least nine times during the seven weeks. As the course instructor, I also participated in the online discussion. To raise awareness about the writing task assessment rubric, the task design in this study consistently used the rubric in class and online as a hook. This was meant to make learners understand the various criteria in the rubric, and to make them pay attention to these components when completing the tasks. Knowledge building scaffolds with rubric criteria were provided to engage learners in

asynchronous feedback. The prompts were recycled to facilitate noticing. Detailed explanation with examples regarding the scaffold building strategies is provided under the second finding in Chapter IV.

It is important to note that while the online peer feedback component was the added component, the other usual in-class tasks and assignments were also being completed as the term progressed. Learners entered awareness building experiences from the other components that were already built into the course such as daily tasks, daily journals, and other assignments.

Table 4 shows the design in this action research and the timeline.

Table 4: Action Research Design and Timeline

	Cycle 1			Cycle 2		Cycle 3	
	Week1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5	Week 6	Week 7
Number of learner tasks	2	5	5	5	5	5	4
Number of online discussion forums	2 (trials)	2 trials + 1	2	2	1	2	1
Data Collected							
Learner Artifacts (class set of 20)	-	1 task	-	-	1 task	-	1 task
Peer Feedback Script	-	1 forum	2 forums	2 forums	1 forums	2 forums	1 forum
Instructor Observation notes + journals	Daily	Daily	Daily	Daily	Daily	Daily	Daily

Although the focus of this research was the online peer interaction, it was also important to do it in conjunction with what was going on in the class. They completed 11 tasks during the first cycle and 9 each in the second and third cycles. They also wrote 20 journal assignments during the first six week. These tasks and journals were completed in partial fulfilment of their course assignments and the same rubric was used for every writing assignment throughout the course. Therefore, data collection from different sources and triangulation during the data

analysis stage was imperative. By using a variety of methods to collect data on the same topic and by collecting data from different sources namely the content in the online discourse, student artifacts and instructor observation and journaling, I was able to analyze, compare, and contrast the results.

Online Discussion During Action Research Cycle 1

The first cycle lasted for the first three weeks. During the first week I found out that none of the learners had previously engaged in online discussion for learning purposes. Hence, they were given the opportunity to get familiar with the features on the Discussion Forum on their course website, Brightspace. Learners who had attended a previous PELP course were familiar with some tabs on Brightspace such as Course Content, Announcements, Course Tools and Assessments. All the four new learners in the course were totally new to various features on Brightspace, so they were paired up with more experienced learners in the first week.

On the first day of class, learners were introduced to various features on the course websites. To give learners some hands-on experience, they were asked to update their profile, preferably with a picture. On the first day of class a Discussion Forum was set up on Brightspace for students to follow up an ice-breaker activity initiated in the class. On the second day another Discussion Forum was set up for students to introduce themselves to the class. Cue-questions along with a sample response in paragraph format were also included in the description. Once learners became familiar and comfortable interacting on the Discussion Forum, they were put into six groups. During the first cycle, they uploaded three tasks, and provided feedback to each other. Table 5 provides a summary of the first cycle of action research.

Table 5: Summary of AR Cycle 1 (Weeks 1, 2 & 3)

	Cycle 1	Plan	Act	Observe	Reflect
Question 1: (What is the nature of awareness about rubrics?)	In-class tasks +	Ask students to complete tasks and assignments as outlined in the PELP curriculum.	Students completed 10 tasks in the class.	Students did not refer to the rubrics when completing the tasks.	-What is the nature of the awareness learners have about the writing task assessment rubric? -What can be done to improve awareness?
	online discussion +	Ask students to engage in online discussions.	Students engaged in 6 online discussions.	Some students had difficulty with technology /interacting online. -not everyone provided feedback/not everyone responded to peer & instructor feedback.	How can students be helped to familiarize with online discussion? -How can cognitive, social and teacher presence be improved? -What can be done to encourage more students to participate?
	observation + journaling	Instructor should observe and take notes from student interactions and artifacts.	Instructor observed and took notes.	Needed to be more organized, intense & timely.	How can my observation be more effective?

It was decided to have mixed ability groups, so they could help each other to provide feedback about their writing as well as to resolve difficulties related to technology. While the whole-class discussion and feedback was instrumental in dealing with multiple layers of ZPDs at the same time (Myhill & Warren, 2005), the online peer feedback was seen as opportunities for tailored scaffolding to meet individual needs. During the first cycle learners were organized in mixed ability groups to maximize the ZPDs (Niu et al., 2018; Strijbos & Dünnebier, 2010) where the more knowledgeable learners could take the lead in identifying rubric related problems and trigger the discussion. Mixed ability groups early in the term also helped the instructor to diagnose learner ability and group dynamics that would help reorganize groups into low-low and

high-high pairings in the second and third cycles where the focus from triggering and exploring had advanced to integrating and resolving problems.

Learners were asked to upload the fourth task completed in the class. This was the final task completed in the first topic, and learners already had enough time to get used to the effect of novelty in the new class. By this time, the class had looked at the writing task assessment rubric, and they had discussed the CLB expectations for the tasks completed in the class. There had been no intervention from me as a researcher so far. Since the peer feedback in this forum was meant to understand how much explicit and implicit knowledge learners had about the criteria in the rubric, no specific detail was given in the instruction in this discussion forum. The instruction was very general, and it read, *“Use this forum to provide feedback to your classmates in your group.”* As a researcher I was also trying to understand how familiar learners were with peer feedback and the technical features of asynchronous discussion in Brightspace, so help was provided as needed. This was another reason for not providing details in the instruction. By the end of the third week all the students managed to post their work on the Discussion Forum. Some students seemed to be overwhelmed by the technology involved, but after doing it three to four times, they were comfortable posting their work in no time. They also completed 10 tasks in the class during the first cycle.

Online Discussion During Action Research Cycle 2

In the fourth and fifth weeks of the course, learners completed 9 more tasks in the class, posted three tasks to discussion forum and engaged in peer feedback in these three forums. After the first cycle, based on the strengths and weaknesses learners had demonstrated during online discussion, they were regrouped. They were in similar and mixed ability groups, so they could learn from each other. Table 6 provides a summary of the second cycle of action research.

Table 6: Summary of AR Cycle 2 (Week 4 & 5)

	Cycle 2	Plan	Act	Observe	Reflect
Question 2 (Effects of asynchronous peer feedback using rubric)	in-class tasks +	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Ask students to complete tasks and assignments as outlined in the PELP curriculum. -Discuss rubrics in the class. -Modify / add “report planning” questions. -Change seating arrangements in the class / in groups 	Students completed 7 tasks in the class.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -students have started referring to the rubrics when completing the tasks. - students give more focused answers during reporting stage in class -tasks & assignments are better completed. 	How can students be helped to advance to integration and resolution stages in critical thinking?
	online discussion +	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Ask students to engage in online discussions. -Assign specific criteria to different groups. -Get the discussion started in person / orally in the class. -Have one-on-one meetings with instructor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students engaged in 3 online discussions. -Students discussed the answers to specific criteria related questions in the class. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Some students still gave general / unrelated comments -Students asked for instructor’s help when giving face to face feedback -Students are comfortable using technology necessary for online discussion. -not everyone provides feedback. -not everyone responds to peer / instructor feedback. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How can students be helped to advance to integration and resolution stages in critical thinking? -What can be done to encourage more students to participate more?
	observation + journaling	Instructor to observe and take notes from student interactions and artifacts.	Instructor used revised observation-cum-journaling log.	-It is more effective / manageable / timely/feasible	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -What are the key themes emerging? -What do learners need help with? -Is it working?

Learners who demonstrated awareness in different rubric criteria were grouped together, so they could notice each other’s strengths and weakness and point out to each other what they should work on. Different from the first cycle of actions, learners were expected to respond to

specific criteria assigned to the group in the second cycle, so they could engage in focused contributions in the second cycle.

Online Discussion During Action Research Cycle 3

The actions in the third cycle were based on the analysis of the data collected and evaluated in the first and second cycles. In the sixth and seventh weeks of the course, learners completed 9 more tasks and posted three tasks and engaged in peer feedback on three forums.

As in the first and second cycles, instructor set up the discussion forums, provided specific instructions regarding the discussion, and assigned discussions groups. In this cycle, they were put in pairs, so they could provide feedback to each other. The instructor also engaged in group discussion. There were ten groups in total, and for each discussion forum they had new partners to work with. As in the second cycle of actions, learners were expected to respond to specific criteria assigned to the pairs in the third cycle. Attention was paid to members getting criteria different from previous discussions, so they could become more familiar with every criterion in the rubric. Table 7 provides a summary of the second cycle of action research.

Table 7: Summary of AR Cycle 3 (Week 6 & 7)

		Plan	Act	Observe	Reflect
Question 2: (Effects of asynchronous peer feedback using rubric)	in-class tasks +	Ask learners to complete tasks and assignments as outlined in the PELP curriculum.	-students completed 9 tasks in the class	-students more often referred to the rubrics when completing the tasks. - students gave more focused answers during reporting stage -tasks & journals are better completed. -There is significance improvement in the social presence. -demonstrate higher levels of critical thinking. -better attendance / attentiveness / motivation	How have the students benefited from this action research? What is the level of awareness? Is it explicit or implicit?
	online discussion +	Ask students to engage in online discussions. -Assign specific criteria to different groups/ pairs -Get the discussion started in person / orally in the class.	-students engaged in 3 online discussions. -students discussed the answers to specific criteria-related questions in the class.	-students more often referred to the rubrics when completing the tasks. - students give more focused answers during reporting stage -tasks & journals were better completed. -There was significant improvement in the social presence. -demonstrated higher levels of critical thinking. -Better attendance / attentiveness / motivation.	How have the students benefited from this AR? What is the level of awareness? Is it explicit or implicit? What could be done better?
	observation + journaling	-Instructor to take notes -Journaling to be longer	-took notes -wrote detailed journals	-ideas overlapped (in-class and online)	What could be done better? What next?

Data Analysis

Data collection is a selective process, and analysis in qualitative research should be concurrent with data collection (Miles et al., 2014). By doing so, there are possibilities for collecting new or better evidence, and to correct built-in blind spots (Miles et al., 2014). Because

of the planning and re-planning involved in action research (Dick & Huxham, 2009; Hinchey, 2008), I started reflecting on the raw data from an early stage and kept an open mind to understand how further data collection would provide new information. The data collected for this study was all scripts either in electronic or handwritten versions. All the responses in the online discussion forum were comments typed up by learner participants or the instructor. In-class tasks were handwritten, but they were uploaded to D2L as PDF files or pictures. Instructor's daily class observation notes were handwritten notes and journaling was typed Word documents. All in all, more than 80% of the data collected was in electronic version, so NVivo12 was used to analyze this data. A more traditional paper-and-pen approach was used to analyze handwritten documents. One handwritten task by each of the 20 participants was collected at the end of each of the three cycles to be analyzed for resolution category under cognitive presence element in the CoI framework. A total of 60 tasks were read carefully at least two times for holistic and analytic assessment and benchmarked using CLB 6 rubric. The handwritten observation notes resulted from reading online feedback on the Discussion Forum, and daily class observation. On a regular basis, the observation notes were reviewed and expanded into write-ups so that it became more intelligible.

After each stage of intervention in each action cycle, I read through the raw data multiple times to make sense of it (Miles et al., 2015). The criteria in the writing task assessment rubric and the two research questions guided the analysis of data; however, the data was also read and interrogated through the lens of the three elements in the Community of Inquiry (CoI) conceptual framework namely cognitive presence (CP), teaching presence (TP) and social presence (SP).

Cognitive presence (CP) is one of the three elements in CoI framework adopted in this study to design and analyse the nature of critical discourse and reflection in online learning. To

analyze the cognitive presence in the asynchronous peer feedback and the tasks completed in the class, data that represented the extent to which the participants were able to construct meaning through their sustained communication was pooled together. Cognitive presence includes the content, ideas, arguments, and opinions of the participants. How well the participants became aware of the rubric criteria could be best understood from the analysis of how well the individual acquired deep and meaningful understanding and content-specific critical inquiry abilities, skills, and disposition. As described in CoI framework (Garrison et al., 2001) and as summarized in Table 8, the analysis of cognitive presence consisted of looking at data in four phases: (1) triggering event (2) exploration (3) integration, and (4) resolution.

Table 8: Cognitive Presence: Categories, Indicators and Socio-Cognitive Processes

Category	Indicators	Socio-Cognitive Processes
Triggering Event (identify issue)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -recognizing the problem -sense of puzzlement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -presenting background information that culminates in a question -asking questions -messages that take discussion in new direction -communicating learning challenges
Exploration (shift between private and social world)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -divergence within a message or many messages -information exchange -suggestions for consideration -brainstorming -trying for conclusions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -teaching presence required -many ideas presented in one message -unsubstantiated contradictions of previous ideas -personal narratives / descriptions -characterises messages as exploration -adds points, but does not establish with justification -offers unsupported opinions
Integration (construct meaning)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -convergence among group members / within a single message -connecting ideas / synthesis -creating solutions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -reference to previous message followed by substantiated / developed ideas and agreement -building on/adding others' ideas -integrating ideas from various sources -explicit characterization of message as a solution
Resolution (intuitive leap)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -vicarious / direct application to real life situations -testing solutions -defending solutions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -applying understanding -moving on to a new problem

Teaching Presence (TP) was the second element of Community of Inquiry analyzed from the data collected from the online interaction using the rubric. As seen in Table 9 the analysis involved looking at how the instructor designed and organized the online discussions, the role played by the instructor in facilitating online discourse, and the way in which instructions were provided.

Table 9: Teaching Presence: Categories, Indicators and Socio-Cognitive Processes

Category	Indicators	SCT & Pedagogical Process / Approach
Instructional Designs and organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -setting curriculum -designing methods -establishing time parameters -utilizing medium effectively -establishing netiquettes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -scaffold – give framework to extend knowledge -demonstrate pedagogical expertise -make aware of explicit and implicit goals -decides what the content should be to discuss -integration of additional resource -decides what kind of activity it should be (group, individual etc.) -allows / monitors adequate time for discussion -helps understand effective features in the media -facilitates appropriate social life
Facilitating Discourse	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -identifying areas of agreement / disagreement -seeking to reach consensus / understanding -encouraging, acknowledging, reinforcing contributions -setting climate for learning - prompting discussion -assessing the efficacy of the process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -facilitate ZPD -establish the positive environment for discourse -helps identify ideas that contradict students' own ideas -sustain the discourse environment -stimulate the social process -share responsibility to respond -model appropriate behaviour -move the discussion along / -make sure information sharing progresses to knowledge construction
Direct instructions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -presents content questions -focus the discussion on specific issues -summarize the discussion -confirm understanding -diagnose misconception -inject information from diverse sources -responding to technical questions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -acts as subject matter expert / the 'knowledgeable other' -sets the depth and tone of intellectual climate -plays assistive role / allows others to intervene before jumping in (but not just a 'guide on the side') -direct attention to particular concept / for growth -summarize to develop and explicitly delineate the context in which knowledge growth has taken place.

Social Presence (SP) was the third aspect of online Community Inquiry analyzed using the data collected throughout the study. Social presence is considered essential for collaborating, sharing ideas, bringing about connectedness, and expressing views. As seen in Table 10, the three indicators analyzed in this element of CoI are emotional expressions, open communication, and group cohesion.

Table 10: Social Presence: Categories, Indicators and Socio-Cognitive Processes

Category	Indicators	SCT & Pedagogical Process / Approach
Affective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -expression of emotions -use of humor -self disclosure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -to bring about connectedness -to express views -to collaborate -conventional / unconventional expression of emotions (use of emoticons, capitalization etc.) -teasing cajoling, irony, humor etc. -presents details of life outside class
Interactive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -continuing a thread -quoting from others' thread -referring explicitly to others' message -asking questions -comprehending, expressing appreciation, expressing agreement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -using reply features of the forum -using the forum features to copy and paste to quote -direct reference to content of others' message -asking questions -complementing expressing agreement
Cohesive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -vocative -addresses or refers to the group using inclusive pronouns -phatic / salutations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - to perceive own personality through online mediated learning -use we, us, our etc. during group communication -communication purely for social function

The analysis of data for cognitive presence, teaching presence and social presence using CoI framework was done with data from each of the nine discussion forums. The ongoing analysis and the resulting information helped inform the next step in the iterative cycle. NVivo12 which is a powerful qualitative analysis software was used to identify patterns in the content across the variety of text data that was collected. It helped to organize and analyze the raw data and thereby discover deep insights. This process helped to ask further questions of the content through

queries. It helped to find connections and to understand underlying emerging themes and patterns that informed and supported decisions in each stage of this study.

A combination of inductive and deductive approach was adopted in analyzing the data collected in this study. At first, by adopting an inductive approach, I left room for the unknown to inform me something that I might not have thought was important before, and to tell me what I could not have imagined before analyzing the data that was being created and analyzed during the knowledge building process. This step was important particularly during the first cycle. At the end of each of the nine discussion sessions on the Discussion Forum, I copied and pasted the discussion threads and responses into a Word document. First, I read through the data to get a first impression. Then, segments of the text were highlighted in the Word document and ‘comments’ function was used to create codes. Coding is the systematic ordering of things to make something part of a system or category (Saldaña, 2013). They are prompts or triggers for deeper reflection (Miles et al., 2014). Coding of the data from various sources or breaking them into meaningful and manageable chunks was done throughout the seven weeks as they were collected in this iterative action research study.

Coding used in this qualitative action research was a critical process in getting insights into the answers for the questions that were pursued in this study. Based on the data that emerged, codes were created during the research process for analyzing the data in a structured way (Urquhart, 2013). Coding was helpful in staying focused throughout the study without overemphasizing any specific aspect (Charmaz, 2006; Stake, 2010). Coding was conducted both manually and using computer assisted qualitative data analysis software – Nvivo12.

The original files were uploaded onto NVivo12, and once again nodes were created, and the data was organized by themes using the node system. The nodes were continually refined.

Sometimes they were sub-divided into more categories and other times similar nodes were merged as one. After collecting and coding all the discussion threads, I also clustered nodes into ‘trees’ by dragging free nodes into parent nodes. Appendix H shows a screen shot of the analysis of the discourse on the first discussion forum and the final discussion forum. A comparison of the two demonstrates change in pattern and content of discussion that took place as well as my familiarity with the data that was collected and the themes that emerged upon analysis.

First and second cycle coding helped me to see a much clearer relationship between the parent nodes and the overarching themes that emerged. In the third round, deductive analysis was undertaken. This time I imposed a set of pre-determined categories of codes integrated from codes that matched descriptions of criteria on the writing task assessment rubric, elements of educational experience in online community of inquiry, and other codes from the inductive analysis that did not belong to any of these pre-determined categories. These were applied as a codebook to the data, and I sifted the data looking for examples of these categories.

In every stage when changes were made to the initial list of codes, they were cross checked with the research questions and the conceptual framework. This was to make sure the codes were related to one another coherently, and they were part of a unified structure (Miles et al., 2014). I got intimate interpretive familiarity with the data in the corpus, was able to segregate data, and detect reoccurring patterns that resulted in themes. The use of codes and associated descriptive data facilitated deeper reflection on the meaning of data collected. Through this process, the interrelationship between the categories shed light on the themes that became obvious. The mapping was done by laying out the component codes that assisted in getting the pattern with the segments of the field notes. Finally, pattern codes were checked out through inferential process in the next cycle using “if-then” tactics.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness in qualitative research is of paramount importance, and it is established by examining the credibility, confirmability, dependability, and transferability of qualitative data (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016; Mertler, 2009).

Credibility. Some of the measures to improve credibility as suggested by Creswell (2015) are the adoption of well-organized research methods, familiarity with the research context, random sampling, triangulation, debriefing sessions between researcher and superiors, peer scrutiny of the project, description of background, qualification and experience of the researcher, and thick description of the phenomenon. I paid attention to these throughout the study to reduce the effect of investigator bias. Several researchers have claimed that reflective writing facilitates intimate introspective processes and can provide emotional shelter when dealing with a sensitive research subject (Lalor et al., 2006; Malacrida, 2007). As Bradbury-Jones (2007) advocated, in this qualitative study, reflective journaling was used as a tool to explore the investigators' level of subjectivity and to minimize bias on the part of the researcher. These journal notes were triangulated with results from other data sources. Besides, samples of tasks and transcript analysis were calibrated by certified CLB assessors. It was also critical to interpret the peer feedback transcript without any bias. Manual coding of the data before entering it into Nvivo12 helped to ensure a deep understanding of the content as well as the intent of participants.

Confirmability. To lend credibility to the theories that emerged from the data, constant comparative analysis was undertaken. This consisted of a constant comparison of codes to codes and categories to categories particularly during the first and second cycles of AR. Opposite, negative, or better examples were sought out (Bisel & Barge, 2011). The constant comparative

analysis continued until new categories could not be found in the data and the existing categories remained stable, achieving theoretical saturation (Charmaz, 2006).

Dependability. Dependability in quantitative research denotes the extent other researchers can repeat or replicate the study with consistent findings (Creswell, 2015). However, this term in qualitative analysis emphasizes accurate documentation of evidence throughout data collection, analysis, and interpretation stages (Creswell, 2015; Marshall & Rossman, 2006). I carefully checked data for errors during documentation, and safeguarded stability in codes in every stage. I also included clear definitions of terms throughout my research to ensure better stability. Since I was the only coder, the issue of inter-coder stability did not arise in this study, but at the same time, the analysis of data was reviewed multiple times for accuracy and consistency. Also, for an inquiry audit in qualitative research, as an insider I provided adequate information in every stage of my investigation including the report. An inquiry audit with the help of the research supervisor and co-supervisor also ensured dependability.

Transferability. Transferability in qualitative research denotes how comparisons to similar context of study can be made (Lincoln, 1995; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Transferability was achieved by providing thick description to demonstrate how the findings can be applicable in similar situations, populations, and phenomena.

Delimitations

The conceptual boundaries in this study were narrowed down through conscious exclusions and inclusions. Firstly, the objective of this study was delimited to exploring the effect of online interactions on raising language learners' awareness about writing task assessment rubrics for successful task completion. In addition, the study was delimited to specific TBLT context in PELP program and the institution. As a result, the timeline for collection of evidence also was

delimited to seven weeks which is the duration of the fast-track course. In addition, convenience sampling narrowed the scope of the study to CLB 6 Reading and Writing course in PELP.

Summary

In this chapter I outlined the method used to answer the research questions, and I included focused discussion of the rationale for qualitative methodology, the choice of action research to include ‘action for change’ and ‘research’, a narrative of the study context and participants, and further discussion of data collection tools, procedures, and analysis. This action research examined how through iterative cycles of action as well as the interlocking phases of collection of evidence and analysis of evidence, learners could be helped to become more aware of the various criteria in the rubric to complete the tasks successfully. Through sociocultural lens within the framework of CoI and qualitative data collection and analysis, it was possible to capture a rich narrative to understand whether the intervention through online mediation was helpful in engaging learners in knowledge creation, and why certain factors could be seen as supportive or as barriers. In Chapter IV I provide the study results and demonstrate how the methodology described in Chapter III was followed in actual practice.

CHAPTER IV: RESULTS

This study was undertaken to raise adult language learners' awareness about writing task assessment rubrics for successful task completion in a task-based language course. In this chapter I describe the process used to analyze the qualitative data to uncover codes and themes. Detailed code and theme data is presented using tables from analysis as well as vignettes from the original data to emphasize key themes and the resultant theory. The findings follow the analysis section.

The following research questions were pursued in this study. The analysis of data from the first cycle of the action research answered the first research question, and the analysis of data from all the three cycles answered the second question.

RQ1: What is the nature of the awareness language learners have about task assessment rubric at the beginning of the TBLT course?

RQ2: What are the effects of using writing task assessment rubric in asynchronous peer feedback in an adult TBLT course?

The sample consisted of 20 adult language learners from 15 countries who spoke 12 different first languages. Many of them were multilingual, and they used English as an additional language. Only four students (20%) were new to PELP and TBLT classes while the rest of the students (80%) had previous experience taking PELP classes.

The action design in this study consistently used writing task assignment rubrics as a hook in class and online in order to give the learners opportunities to frequently notice various criteria. The underlying assumption was that by doing so, learners would pay attention to these components when completing the tasks and assignments. When interacting with peers in the online discussion they were supposed to become increasingly aware of the criteria and

terminology in the rubric. As shown in Table 11, the action research was conducted in three iterative cycles of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting.

Table 11: Types of Data Collected by AR Cycles and Weeks

	Cycle 1			Cycle 2		Cycle 3	
	Week1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5	Week 6	Week 7
Peer Feedback Script	-	1 forum	2 forums	2 forums	1forum	2 forums	1 forum
Student Artifacts (class set)	-	1 task			1 task		1 task
Instructor Observation notes + journals	Daily	Daily	Daily	Daily	Daily	Daily	Daily

During the seven weeks learners completed 28 tasks in the class and uploaded nine of them to the Discussion Forum in the class website. They provided and received asynchronous peer feedback on these nine tasks. When completing the tasks and providing peer feedback, the knowledge building scaffolds with rubric criteria were provided to engage learners meaningfully. The data from the feedback text generated in the discussion forum, selected tasks completed by the learners and the instructor's observation notes and journals was collected, interpreted, and analyzed to capture the nature of awareness learners had about the rubrics and to understand the effect of the asynchronous peer feedback.

Data Analysis

The purpose of answering the first question in this action research was to thoroughly understand the context of the action research so that I as the researcher could build on the awareness learners already had and plan the iterative course of actions in the ensuing phases. The analysis of data collected to understand the level of awareness learners in the PELP course have about the writing task assessment rubric comprised of looking at the data from (a) feedback text from learners' asynchronous interaction in the first three forums along with one class set of

student writing completed in the class at the end of the first cycle, and (b) instructor's observation notes and journal entries during the first three weeks. The purpose of answering the second question was to understand the effects of using writing task assessment rubric in asynchronous peer feedback. The analysis consisted of looking at the data from (a) feedback text from learners' asynchronous interaction in the nine forums during the seven weeks along with one class sets of tasks written by students in the class in each of the three cycles, and (b) instructor's observation notes and journal entries during the seven weeks.

The source of data was the feedback text generated in the discussion forum, selected tasks completed by the learners, and the instructor's observation notes and journals. After the deadline for each discussion forum, learner responses were copied and pasted to a word document and analyzed line by line for codes and categories leading to themes. At the end of each stage of intervention, I read through the data multiple times to make sense of it. The data was read through the lens of Community of Inquiry (CoI) framework adopted in this study, the writing task assessment rubric, and the questions that guided this study. The insight gathered from each stage fed into the actions taken in the stages that followed. Table 12 provides a summary of the stages and process of coding and analyzing described in Chapter 3.

Table 12: Stages and Process of Coding and Analyzing

Stages	Process of Coding and Analyzing
First Round: Open Coding	Code text line by line manually; assign unique new code or existing pre-determined codes from rubric and criteria in CoI framework.
Second Round: Selective Coding	Enter text in Nvivo12; identify categories through mind mapping by grouping open codes: combine pre-determined and new categories; create code book; pool vignettes under codes and categories
Third Round: Thematic Coding	Create memos; discover themes through mind mapping by linking vignettes, codes and categories; look for relationship

A combination of inductive and deductive approach was adopted in analyzing the data. Since the purpose of this study was to increase awareness about the five criteria on the writing

task assessment rubric, the pre-set categories when collecting and analyzing the data were the criterion on the rubric and related terms within the CoI framework that comprises of cognitive, social and teaching presence.

The consolidated data from each of the data source for each question is organized and presented below for each of the three elements in the CoI framework. Graphical representations of the codes sorted and categorized during the analysis are also presented. To establish increased clarity and credibility as well as to provide insight into the process of coding the evidence, samples of evidence captured are also included. It should be noted the numbers and charts included in this chapter only provide evidence for the wide range of elements this action research focused on throughout the seven weeks. The analysis of data particularly after the third round of thematic coding was qualitative and not quantitative. Further synthesis of data under four themes that emerged from the open codes and selective codes supported by specific examples of evidence follows this section. In order to answer the two research questions, a description of the actions taken, a narration of how the participants responded to the intervention, and a description of how the action changed the status-quo are included in the themes.

As seen in Table 13, there were fewer threads and posts during the first cycle. Some learners were still getting used to the discussion forum features and the concept of providing feedback to peers while many others were expecting the instructor to give feedback to everyone. It should be noted that most of posts in the first forum were contributions by the instructor after the allotted time. There were almost equal number of vignettes related to cognitive and social presence at 35 and 37 respectively, and the highest numbers of posts were related to teaching presence, mostly initiated by the instructor.

Table 13: Number of Instances of Asynchronous Posts across Various Categories

Number of Instances of Asynchronous Posts							
	Forum	Number of Threads	Number of Posts	Total Number of words	Cognitive Presence	Teaching Presence	Social Presence
Cycle 1	Task 4	25	29	More than 3500 words	35	45	37
	Task 8	21	21				
	Task 11	30	21				
Cycle 2	Task 13	29	42	More than 5500 words	46	52	52
	Task 16	22	26				
	Task 18	24	54				
Cycle 3	Task 20	26	32	More than 7500 words	41	48	37
	Task 23	22	39				
	Task 26	23	38				
Total				More than 16000 words	122	145	126

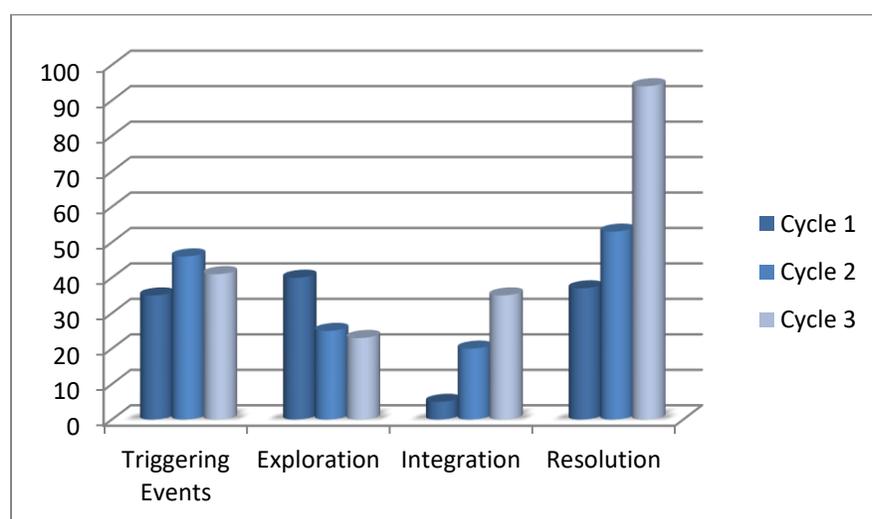
There were higher numbers of threads and posts during the second cycle and the highest number of threads and posts were in the third cycle. In the first cycle in three discussion forums combined there were only about 3500 words, but in the second cycle there were close to 5500 words and more than 7500 words in the third cycle. This shows an increase in the amount of details the respondents included in their discussion over seven weeks.

Analysis of Cognitive Presence

Cognitive presence is one of the three elements in CoI framework adopted in this study to design and analyse the nature of critical discourse and reflection in online learning. In order to analyze the cognitive presence in in the asynchronous peer feedback and the tasks completed in the class, data that represented the extent to which the participants were able to construct meaning through their sustained communication was pooled together. Cognitive presence includes the content, ideas, arguments, and opinions of the participants. How well the participants became aware of the rubric criteria could be best understood from the analysis of how well the individual acquired deep and meaningful understanding and content-specific critical inquiry abilities, skills, and disposition. As described in CoI framework (Garrison et al., 2004) the analysis of cognitive presence consisted of looking at data in four phases: (1)

triggering event (2) exploration (3) integration and (4) resolution. Analysis of data began by looking at the codes that represented these phases in cognitive presence as spelled out in CoI. All the vignettes across the three cycles of online interaction that matched the categories under cognitive presence element in Nvivo12 were once again closely reviewed through the lens of CoI and the rubric components. Figure 5 includes the number of times learners referred to rubric components to demonstrate their levels of critical thinking: triggering events, exploration, integration, and resolution. As noted in Chapter III, instances of resolution were captured from the analysis of tasks learners completed at the end of each cycle of action.

Figure 5: *Cognitive Presence - Number of References in Cycle 1, 2 & 3*



In looking across the rows and columns in the chart above it is clear the number of instances of feedback related to cognitive presence slightly varied across each rubric criterion in each of the three iterative cycles. Also, there were higher number of feedback comments about triggering events and exploration particularly in the first and second cycles. It should be noted that most of the triggering events were initiated by the instructor, and to fade away the scaffolding and to transfer responsibility to each learner, the feedback from the instructor was fewer towards the end of the term. The number of students who were able to make meaning

through integration of ideas as well as apply their understanding of the rubric through resolution also increased dramatically from cycle to cycle.

Triggering Events. The analysis of the triggering events which is the initial stage of critical inquiry in the online peer feedback was a process of looking at the data for the frequency of instances that helped learners to identify or recognize the problem. The triggering events in the online discussion could be initiated by the instructor or the learners. Since the discussion forums were initiated by the instructor for pre-determined learning outcomes, most of the triggering events were started and mainly facilitated by the instructor. The data shows that in addition to explicitly communicating the expectations for discussion in each forum, the instructor posed questions, provided hints to make learners start thinking about the issue, and sometimes tried to be cognizant of potential distracting triggering events by peers in the group. In the third cycle many learners followed the suit and started asking questions to their peers about the rubric expectations. There were 35, 46 and 41 triggering events in cycle 1, 2 and 3 respectively. Since this element is analyzed and discussed under teaching presence later, the analysis here focused on instances where learner responses to the discussion forum triggered further inquiry by peers. Appendix I includes samples of instances of learner initiated triggering events for each criterion in the rubric in each cycle.

This data is discussed in detail in each of the subsequent findings below. In general, the evidence analyzed under triggering events uncovered more instances of some sub-categories over others. Similarly, across all the rubric criteria, the length of the triggering events learners posted was longer with examples and details, thus pinpointing the problem that emerged. It might appear that the number of contributions became fewer as the learners progressed from the

first discussion forum to the ninth, but it should be noted the number of instances of triggering events posted by the learners increased while that posted by the instructor decreased.

Exploration. The analysis of the exploration stage of cognitive presence involved looking at the number of times learners used ideas related to the rubric components to explore it for themselves from the triggering events posted by the instructor or their peers. The focus of analysis in this stage was to look for instances that showed the participants perceived the nature of the problem triggered in the previous stage. As the researcher, I looked for content in the online discussion that demonstrated the learners tried to respond to the scaffold support for reification of the awareness building principles whereby they tried to grasp the information presented by me as the instructor, the task and their peers by repeatedly moving between reflection and discourse in the community of inquiry.

The data indicates that as the term progressed, the increasing number of scaffolds helped learners to elucidate the nature of the knowledge building process as envisaged in the discussion forums. Learners started to use the metalinguistic language related to the rubric criteria and made references to the language in the tasks posted in their discussion. There were 40, 25 and 23 triggering events in cycle 1, 2 and 3 respectively. The decreasing number of vignettes related to exploration category as the term progressed could be a positive sign of the number of learners who moved up their thinking and discussion to integration stage. As can be seen in Figure 5 above, the evidence analyzed under exploration category uncovered more instances of some sub-categories over others. Similarly, across all the rubric criteria, the length of the feedback learners provided was longer. Appendix J includes samples of feedback posts related to exploration by learners for each criterion in the rubric in each cycle. This data is also discussed in detail in each of the subsequent findings later in this chapter.

Integration. The third category of cognitive presence was analyzed by looking at the data for how the learners tried to construct meaning from the ideas generated through triggering events and the resulting exploration stage. I looked for evidence that showed the learners continued to move between the private and shared worlds through their contribution in the discussion forum. This higher level of cognition was facilitated through the previous stages, and the instructor presence was an essential component in diagnosing misconceptions, providing probing questions, making comments that helped learners to extend the information they gathered during the exploration stage, and by providing additional information. Hence, I looked for evidence of discourse clustered around these aspects.

There were only five vignettes that could be categorized as integration in the first cycle, but it rose to 25 and 35 respectively in the second and third cycles respectively. The low number of vignettes related to integration category at the beginning of the term could indicate low level of awareness about the rubric criteria as well. However, as the term progressed more and more learners moved away from chit chat and demonstrated deeper understanding of the criteria they discussed. As can be seen in Figure 5 the evidence analyzed under integration category uncovered more instances of some sub-categories over others. Similarly, across all the rubric criteria, the length of the feedback learners provided was longer. Appendix K includes samples of feedback posts related to integration by learners for each criterion in the rubric in each cycle. This data is also discussed in detail in each of the subsequent findings later in this chapter.

Resolution. The final category of cognitive presence was analyzed by looking at how the learners were able to demonstrate practical application of the newly acquired knowledge facilitated by the other three stages namely triggering events, exploration and integration. Within the community of inquiry in this action research, it was assumed that the learners had acquired

the expected knowledge about the requirements of the tasks by engaging in peer interaction using the rubric. Therefore, new tasks were introduced, so students could go through the critical thinking process and apply their understanding of the rubric criteria in the new tasks. It was assumed that the learners would take the intuitive leap whereby they would be able to complete the tasks successfully. The data for this phase of analysis was collected from the final tasks at the end of each topic learners completed in each of cycle. One sample submitted by the learner in each action cycle was assessed using the task assessment rubric.

Each learner was assessed against five criteria in the rubric. Therefore, if all 20 learners demonstrated they could apply their understanding of rubric effectively, there would have been 100 instances in each cycle. However, as can be seen in Figure 5 above, there were only 37 instances of resolution in the class set of tasks assessed in the first cycle. The numbers rose to 53 in the second cycle and to 94 in the class set assessed at the end of the third cycle indicating higher level of awareness about the rubric criteria. It is also clear from the table that the learners demonstrated awareness about some criteria over others. Similarly, across the entire rubric criteria, the length of various tasks learners completed was longer, and is indicative of increasing level of fluency in writing as the term progressed. Appendix L includes samples of tasks completed by learners in each cycle considered to be the resolution stage. This data is also discussed in detail with more samples in each of the subsequent findings later in this chapter.

Analysis of Teaching Presence

The second element of Community of Inquiry analyzed from the data collected from the online interaction using the rubric was teaching presence. The analysis involved looking at how the instructor designed and organized the online discussions, the role played by the instructor in facilitating online discourse, and the way instructions were provided. The analysis of data

regarding the first component which was the design and organization focused on how the instructor considered the process and structure of the online interaction by looking at components such as setting curriculum, designing methods, establishing time parameters, utilizing medium effectively and establishing netiquette.

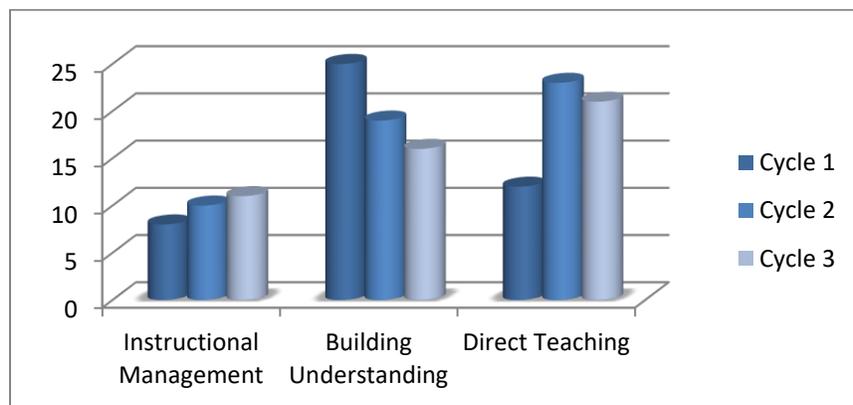
The second component, discourse facilitation, was analyzed by considering how the instructor stimulated the social presence and maintained the interest, motivation and engagement of the learners in online discussion. The analysis looked at the way the instructor made clear to the participants the explicit and implicit goals of engaging in online interaction using the rubric. Six indicators of effective discourse facilitation in CoI framework were identifying areas of agreement and disagreement, seeking to reach consensus, encouraging, acknowledging or reinforcing student contributions, setting climate for learning, drawing in participants prompting discussion and assessing the efficacy of the process.

The third component namely direct instruction was analyzed by looking at data to determine how the instructor demonstrated subject matter expertise and guided the students through intellectual discourse. Seven indicators of effective discourse facilitation considered in this analysis are presenting content questions, focusing the discussion on specific issues, summarizing the discussion, confirming understanding through assessment and explanatory feedback, diagnosing misconceptions, injecting knowledge from diverse sources, and responding to technical concerns.

As evident in Figure 6 below, the instructor tried to facilitate cognitive and social presence in the asynchronous community of learning by attending to all the components of teaching presence. There were only 45, 52 and 48 instances of teacher presence in cycle 1, 2 and 3 respectively. Since the online component was only an added component to a face-to-face

course, there were fewer instances of instructional management than building understanding and direct teaching. Components of teaching presence such as setting curriculum, and designing methods were not particularly relevant to the new segment of online discussion.

Figure 6: Teaching Presence - Number of References in Cycle 1, 2 and 3



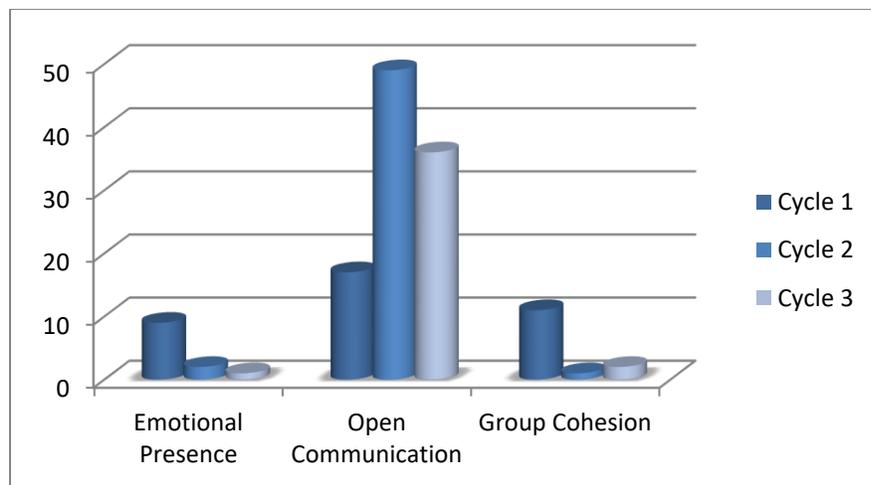
Appendix M includes samples of vignettes that show teaching presence under each of the three components. This data is also discussed in detail with relevant samples in each of the subsequent findings later in this chapter.

Analysis of Social Presence

The third aspect of Community of online Inquiry analyzed using the data collected throughout the study was the extent of social presence that is essential for collaborating, sharing ideas, bringing about connectedness and expressing views. The three indicators analyzed in this element of CoI are emotional expressions, open communication, and group cohesion. The first is named affective category that are expressions of emotions, use of humor and self-disclosure. Expression of emotions in text-based interaction could include repetitions, punctuation, conspicuous capitalization, emoticons etc. Participants may express humor by teasing, cajoling, irony, understatement or sarcasm. Self-disclosure is another indicator whereby participants might present details about life outside of class or express vulnerability. The second category of social

presence include indicators such as continuing a thread, quoting from others' messages, referring explicitly to others' messages, asking questions, complimenting, expressing appreciation, and expressing agreement. The third and final category of social presence includes vocatives, group inclusive expressions, phatic and salutations.

Figure 7: Social Presence - Number of References in Cycle 1, 2 and 3



As seen in Figure 7 social presence was evident in each of the three categories, but participants used the forum for open communication than expressing emotions to maintain group cohesion. The reason for this is probably because the discussions were just an extension of face-to-face class, and the online component was very focused in the online forums. There were 37, 52 and 39 instances of teacher presence in cycle 1, 2 and 3 respectively. It is important to note that most of these learners had been attending classes together in previous levels. Although they showed familiarity and communicated well in the face-to-face class, they had difficulty communicating in the new online environment. Appendix N includes samples of vignettes that show social presence under each of the three components. This data is also discussed in detail with more samples in each of the subsequent findings later in this chapter.

Findings

Analyzing the data using the three elements of Community of Inquiry framework – cognitive presence, teaching presence and social presence – helped to elucidate the effect of peer interaction to raise awareness about the criteria in the writing task assessment rubric. Four themes related to raising awareness about task assessment rubric emerged from the mind-mapping in NVivo12 and thematic coding. Mind-mapping technique was used to further understand relationships within the open codes, across the selective codes, and within the CoI framework codes to aid thematic code discovery. The data and codes were analyzed to see how the two research questions were answered. The awareness raising themes that resulted from thematic coding included: (a) learners had low level of awareness about the rubric at the beginning of the course, (b) teaching presence focused on scaffolding (c) participants re-conceptualized writing and the role of rubrics, and (d) increased awareness resulted in higher level of proficiency in writing.

The first theme is focused on the nature of awareness language learners had about the task assessment rubric at the beginning of the TBLT course. It is the result of reviewing the relationship between open and selective coding during the first cycle of action research. The other three themes are also a result of selective coding with a more direct tie to changes in learners as well as the instructor and their learning resulting from asynchronous peer interaction. The analysis for themes involved both consolidation of the selective codes and weaving across the data and codes within the CoI categories. The major difference between the selective codes and themes is the emphasis on the overall shift in rubric related awareness noticed in learners during the three phases of peer interaction across all elements of CoI.

Finding 1: Learners Had Low Level of Awareness at the Beginning of the Course

In order to answer the first research question about the level of awareness language learners had at the beginning of the course, mind mapping technique was used across the data in the first-round open coding, the second round of selective coding that included the categories in CoI framework, and the criteria in the writing rubric from the first cycle of action research supported by the observation notes. Codes such as only noticed, cannot explain, no understanding, no details and no response were combined to elucidate the theme that learners had low level of awareness at the beginning of the course. All the vignettes were considered significant contributors to the thematic coding and were pooled together and closely analyzed to understand learners' level of awareness about the rubric components.

For example, when looking at each of the triggering events initiated by the learners in the cognitive presence element in CoI framework, the online discourse signalled absence of awareness or low level of awareness about each of the five criteria in the writing rubric. Out of 35 codes identified in the triggering event category, 16 (46%) of them were triggered by the instructor. There were 40 nodes under the exploration category in the first cycle, and there were feedback comments that demonstrated a few learners although to a very limited extent, made attempts to grasp the nature of the ideas related to each of the five rubric criteria. There were a few learners who did not participate in the asynchronous discussion during the first cycle; however, those who chose to provide feedback used at least one key word related to the rubric criteria and the descriptors as evident in the following vignettes.

You did well in apologize and organization. Nice job!

About your grammar, I am not a specialist, for that I think that is really good.

I think your email is good but you need to add more details.

Analysis of learners' awareness about each of the rubric criteria during the first cycle of action research is presented below with sample vignettes and tasks under separate headings.

Organization. There was only one vignette related to triggering event under organization of ideas in the tasks they completed and uploaded for peer feedback during the first cycle. Out of the 40 nodes identified in exploration category, 10 (25%) were related to organization of ideas in the tasks uploaded for peer feedback. Some learners mentioned what they appreciated about the organization of ideas such as separating the ideas into different paragraphs in emails and using transition words as in the following examples.

However, you should divide your paragraph. It makes more easy [sic] to read your writing.

I like the way you arrange your paragraph form because our instructor says we make it that way.

You have used appropriate transitions words.

I think your paragraph structures is good just as the functions we learn today.

Here the learners were able to notice the importance of having separate paragraphs in the email, but details about where the paragraphs should be divided or what the main ideas in each paragraph was not mentioned in the feedback. They also did not elaborate on the key terms in the rubric criteria to demonstrate deeper understanding of the metalinguistic language. It was noticed that most of these ideas were points of discussion during the class. Nobody was able to explicitly verbalize in comprehensive feedback to elaborate on what is involved in showing adequate paragraph structure, expressing main ideas, providing supporting details and giving examples of appropriate connective words. The instructor noticed learners did not demonstrate their understanding of organization in the first task completed in the class and noted in the journal:

... Only 2 students had multiple paragraphs in the first email they wrote in the class this morning. ... I should follow up on this by adding questions about organization of ideas in report planning stage, and by directing learners' attention to the same in the sample emails and letters they get in the task analysis stage...

When all the 20 tasks completed by the learners during the class at the end of the first topic were closely analyzed using CLB 6 rubric criteria, it was found that only 9 learners (45%) demonstrated adequate paragraph structure with clearly expressed main ideas. However, these tasks did not have adequate supporting details and evidence of appropriate use of connective words and phrases.

Grammar. Regarding grammar criteria, during the first cycle of peer feedback in the three forums, only five learners tried to trigger the discussion with comments about the use of preposition, punctuation, and choice of modal verbs. Although they were able to notice some aspects of the expectations for CLB 6 criteria, their feedback was mainly superficial and focused on error correction as seen in the vignettes below.

... You use so, but you did not use comma before the so.

... In the second paragraph you have a wrong fragment problem.

These comments did not demonstrate their understanding of the specific expectations mentioned in the rubric criteria such as the use of complex sentences and compound sentences.

Six learners demonstrated a low level of exploration and only one learner showed signs of integration of ideas related to expected grammatical structures in their tasks. They mentioned what they liked about their peer's tasks as well as what should be fixed such as including complex sentences, using correct capitalization and punctuation, and using structures that help to

express the functions in the task. At the same time, nobody provided detailed feedback that demonstrated they understand the type of structures appropriate for the task and CLB 6.

Yes. I should use complex sentences, so I will try it next writing.

However, if you had used a variety of comparison words (while, whereas, unlike, etc.), I think your writing would have been more interesting.

However, when all the 20 tasks completed by the learners during the class at the end of the first topic were closely analyzed using CLB 6 rubric criteria, it was found that a total of 8 (40%) learners applied their understanding of the expected grammatical structures in this task considered to be the opportunity for learners to apply their understanding in a vicarious action. These learners used a few subordinating conjunctions such as because, if, that and when in their tasks. The instructor was also following up in the class to understand the level of explicit understanding about the expectations regarding grammar. For the report planning stage in the final task in the first topic, the instructor intentionally added two questions related to grammar: (1) How many complex sentences do you have? (2) Did you include grammatical structures from the previous tasks? The learner who responded to the first question during the presentation asked, ‘*what’s a complex sentence?*’ and the learner who responded to the second question asked, ‘*which task?*’ The instructor opened the questions for whole class response, but no one responded in the positive. An anecdote from the instructor’s journal reads as follows:

For the fourth day in a row the reporting stage did not go well. It was clear that the learners were waiting for me to answer the questions for them ... they need help to think on their own. They are not ready to take the intuitive leap in the tasks that are so well laid out through scaffolding in the curriculum.

From the online discussion and the tasks completed in the class, it was evident that only about

40% of the learners were able to apply their implicit knowledge about expected grammatical structures, and only about 25% learners demonstrated explicit understanding of the terms such as developing control of complex structures, good control of simple structures, and adequate control of spelling and mechanics

Vocabulary. During the first three weeks of online discussion in the three forums, there were only three references to appropriate use of vocabulary coded as triggering events and six coded as exploration. Some of these feedback comments did not show their understanding of the CLB 6 expectations regarding vocabulary criteria. A few comments showed learners were able to recognize some errors in word forms or issues with word choice, but they still lacked full exploration of the requirements under this criterion as evident in the vignettes below:

Maybe there are some vocabulary problems in the mail such as 'hard worker' 'up-date'

In second paragraph it is better to use 'the other one' instead of 'otherwise'.

It's good job. I like how you use 'similar' and "according to"

The last example shows the learner had started thinking about the types of words and expressions that are appropriate to show the functions in their tasks. No one demonstrated a comprehensive understanding with respect to the criterion by elaborating on the adequacy of vocabulary specific to the tasks or by suggesting the type of vocabulary that helped to communicate moderately complex message through these tasks. However, when analyzing the tasks completed in the class, it was evident that about 11 learners (55) % were able to apply their implicit knowledge about expected vocabulary. They used appropriate vocabulary by borrowing task related words and expressions and synonyms from the pre-task.

Audience and Content. Nine learners provided peer feedback about audience and content in the tasks to trigger further exploration, and 11 learners showed signs of exploration

during the first three weeks of online discussion. The comments touched on the use of appropriate expressions, level of formality and lack of details. Although these learners were able to notice some aspects of audience and content in the tasks, the comments did not include details that demonstrate their deeper understanding of what the expectations are as per CLB 6 requirements. The following comments are examples for lack of details.

I would like to mention that you should avoid contractions form in your writing.

I would like to suggest you exploring more details to close your email.

I can understand well your writing because you explain well your situation. Also, I think your writing is formal.

Some of these comments in the peer feedback showed learners were willing to dive into social exploration, and thus demonstrate they were able to perceive some of the expectations in this rubric criterion, but nobody showed a fuller understanding of what audience and content in the specific tasks they considered were meant to be. Only two learners demonstrated aspects of integration while responding to their peers:

Thanks for your feedback so much. Honestly, when I check the report planning, I recognize that I missed an appreciating expression, so I added on my writing.

I like the reason you mentioned in your email. If I were your supervisor, I probably would accept your request right away.

However, when all the 20 tasks completed by the learners during the class at the end of the first topic were closely analyzed using CLB 6 rubric criteria, it was found that 11 (55%) learners applied their understanding of the audience and content related criteria in this task. Compared to previous classes, many learners in this class seemed to be comfortable addressing the rubric

related to audience and content. Excerpts from the instructor's comments in the journal after assessing the 20 tasks reads as follows:

Although they had difficulty in the first two tasks, in today's task almost half the class was able to provide adequate details as well. This could be because most of these learners have been in Canada and have been exposed to longer periods of social and workplace interactions. Majority of them have also attended previous PELP classes.

Task Completion. Nobody posted triggering comments related to task completion during the first three weeks of online discussion. However, there were seven comments that demonstrated signs of exploration from the tasks posted and the triggering events initiated by the instructor.

It would be better if you give your suggestion.

It is very polite request also you mentioned every functions of task ...

These comments were mostly about including all the functions in the tasks. These comments could have been better explored by identifying the specific functions and elaborating on how the writer effectively addressed or did not address them. They could also mention if the writers completed the tasks within the time and provided adequate details. However, when all the 20 tasks completed by the learners during the class at the end of the first topic were closely analyzed using CLB 6 rubric criteria, it was found that only 8 (40%) learners completed this task considered to be the opportunity for learners to apply their understanding in a vicarious action. The other learners did not have adequate fluency to complete the tasks within the given time.

In brief, during the first three weeks of in-class and online interaction, learners demonstrated very low level of understanding of the expectations about writing at CLB 6 level as outlined in the course rubric. About 20% to 25% of the learners demonstrated explicit

understanding of the description of each of the five criteria in the rubric. Learners who demonstrated their understanding of the rubric criteria were more willing to share their ideas in the class and demonstrated higher levels of proficiency in writing the tasks as well. However, it should also be noted that almost half the class was able to apply some of these criteria using their implicit knowledge in the tasks they completed in the class.

Finding 2: Teaching Presence Focused on Scaffolding

Another theme that emerged during the inductive and deductive analysis of open and selective codes was the change that occurred related to instructor behavior during the seven weeks of action research. When looking for themes through mind mapping, it was evident that many codes connected back to the teaching presence element within CoI framework. Clustering of these codes related to teaching presence led to sub-themes that aligned well with the three sub-categories under teaching presence in CoI framework: instructional design and organization, facilitating discourse, and direct instructions. Through further analysis these sub-themes converged into the wider scaffolding efforts the instructor was making throughout the action research. Samples of vignettes from the data collected and presented in Appendixes I to L provide clear evidence of how the CoI framework was used to extend learners' understanding of the rubric criteria. Data suggests the instructor was actively involved in scaffolding both during the TBLT stages in the class and the newly added asynchronous peer feedback component.

Scaffolding in TBLT Stages in the Class. Although scaffolding was kept to the minimum during the first cycle of AR in the first three discussion forums, the instructor as usual facilitated the TBLT stages in daily lessons and responded to learner needs. Instructor's journal excerpt shows proactive measures being adopted early in the term.

If I hadn't taught these courses before, I would have taken many things for granted. For example, given that all except four learners have completed previous PELP classes, they are supposed to be familiar with the rubric and the criteria ... performance early in the term shows the learners are not able to make connections to 'get there' on their own. Tapping into their prior knowledge has offered some ideas for scaffolding techniques in the coming weeks...

An important stage in TBLT that required instructor's attention to scaffolding was the 'Report Planning' stage. During the first two weeks it was noticed that most of my learners did not pay attention to Report Planning stage in TBLT which is the most important stage in raising awareness. The task is simply a triggering event. The Report Planning stage in task-based learning is supposed to help learners navigate through exploration, integration, and resolution stages through critical thinking process. However, most of the learners continued to write the task when they were supposed to make changes based on the questions projected on the screen. The instructor's journal entry at the end of the second week reads as follows:

(Learners) are not aware of the importance of reflecting on the task they just completed. Some used this time to chit-chat, to go on their cell phones, or to take washroom break. A few learners occasionally looked at each other's task...

From the class discussion that followed at the end of the second week and the individual conversation the instructor had with the students, it was clear the students did not take the Report Planning stage seriously for many reasons. Many students mentioned they did not have enough time to complete the task, so they continued to do the task. Some of them mentioned they did not understand what the question meant. A few other students thought there was no point in looking at the questions as the task was already done.

Therefore, the instructor analyzed the scaffolding that had been provided so far in the class and in the discussion forum. It was evident the criteria in the rubric were not evenly distributed across the lessons in the ‘report planning’ questions. As seen in Appendix O, out of 35 report planning questions that were posted during the first cycle, only one question was related to organization, no question about grammar, two questions about vocabulary, 13 questions about audience and content, one question was about task completion, eight questions were not specifically related to any rubric criteria, six focused on reading skills, and two were too vague for learners to comprehend. Based on the analysis, the instructor added report planning questions for each criterion in each lesson in the following weeks. The questions were also simplified, so learners could comprehend them easily. Scaffolding in report planning stage resulted in active engagement in the weeks that followed.

In addition, a code that related directly to the scaffolding efforts in teaching presence was the front-loading of the vocabulary or phrases related to the rubric criteria. On the second day of class learners completed an in-class activity where they had to categorize jumbled CLB Can Do Statements into CLB 5, 6 or 7. This activity was done to make learners think about the rubric criteria and the expectations for CLB 6 course they are going to complete. The instructor’s journal reads as follows:

However, there were many learners who did not demonstrate awareness about the basic terminology in the Can Do Statements. CLB Can Do Statements need to be reviewed from time to time so learners become more familiar with the expectations ...

The addition of new questions in the report planning stage and simplification of the vocabulary related to the rubric criteria resulted in greater learner engagement during report planning stage. Throughout the second and third week, many sought clarifications about simple

terminologies such as complex sentence, paragraph structure, vocabulary and audience. It was an encouraging sign, but the instructor also noted the following in the journal in the second week:

They should have discussed these in the previous courses. Should I directly answer these questions? How much time should I spend to explicitly teach these words? Does it align with the learner-centered and meaning focused TBLT lessons learners have been attending for two to four months? Should I simply let my learners to take the bumpy road to figure it out on their own?

Since each lesson had stipulated time frame to go through the six stages each day, in addition to the time spent in the class each day, the instructor decided to hold special a session in the third week to address rubric related questions. Selected tasks completed by the learners were used as samples for learners to identify CLB criteria and to assess if the tasks met CLB 6 requirements. This activity was done in small groups, so everyone got time to tackle the challenge, to discover on their own and to discuss in groups.

Furthermore, a code that matched scaffolding technique was the use of outlines to prepare for the task. After the pre-task, learners were required to spend a few minutes to prepare an outline for their task. During this process they were expected to give due consideration to the various criteria in the rubric. The outlines were used as a training wheel for organizing ideas throughout the term. However, it should be noted that many learners were new to this concept. An excerpt from the instructor's journal in the fifth week reads as follows:

Many learners found the outlining strategy very helpful and embraced it whole heartedly, but a few of them still couldn't make connection between an outline and the real writing task. One of the arguments for not preparing an outline was that they did not have time to write an outline and the task.

Through scaffolding the instructor continued to facilitate and monitor outline prior to the task stage throughout the first and second cycles, and as learners took up more responsibility, the instructor gradually withdrew from whole class enforcement in the third cycle. Most of the learners prepared outlines even when they were not directly instructed to do so. Resultantly, the tasks were more focused and almost everyone improved fluency in writing and completed the tasks on time.

Some of the scaffolding efforts in the class were in response to what the instructor noticed in asynchronous discussion. For example, even in the fourth week, some students still had difficulty with the features in the Discussion forum, and some of them were hesitant to share their ideas. Therefore, to facilitate discussion media, the instructor resorted to a ‘show and tell’ approach in scaffolding. The instructor had to demonstrate his pedagogical expertise and set out to review once again the explicit and implicit goals of the AR and demonstrated the features in the forum. The instructor’s journal entry in the fourth week reads:

Participants are likely to learn better and faster by seeing something as opposed to listening to something and figuring out by self. Written work has characteristics of permanence. My learners might be intimidated when having to provide feedback online. They might need time to process the information and ideas orally before they post it. This might also give them better clarity in their own mind and help them to focus on the report planning stage in the class... During the task they focus on forms and not on meaning and fluency...

Based on this reflection, learners were given more responsibility in groups in the class. They were asked to sit according to the discussion forum groups to increase familiarity. In order to dissuade learners from continuing to write after the time allowed, the instructor initialled

wherever they were when the time elapsed. Also, the instructor had to be flexible within the task stages. Individual time to make changes to the tasks based on the questions posted was shortened, and the groups were asked to discuss one specific question related to each of the five rubric criteria. Think-pair-share strategy was weaved into the report planning stage to help them articulate their ideas. They were given the opportunity to speak about the responses before they post written feedback. Having to engage in group discussion temporarily took their attention away from ‘finishing’ the task. In the following weeks when the learners showed confidence in posting their responses online and improved their fluency in writing in the class, these scaffolds were less frequent.

Scaffolding was further enhanced by adding the dimension of ‘show and tell’ in the fifth week. The groups had to discuss all the possible answers to the report planning question assigned, and a representative from the group had to present to the entire class the answers along with their tasks. If the group members had disagreement, they had to check with the instructor before the presentation. After following this procedure for a few days, there was dramatic improvement in the quality of the responses, and the instructor’s debrief time was reduced significantly. The changes in the pre-designed cycles of action brought about immediate results. An excerpt from the instructor’s journal at the end of the fourth week reads:

‘Show and Tell’ really seems to work. This morning, even before the class started, I heard a few students discuss the online feedback they received from each other. Although it is not a requirement, I see that many learners are bringing gadgets (laptops, tablets, phones etc.) to the class... Modelling possible responses in groups and articulating them orally to the entire class or to peers before posting seem to help scaffolding, particularly the slow learners. Modelling the thought process is important.

Since the questions were asked in the class, learners got an opportunity to think about it as well as to respond orally. Giving them time to post their responses in writing outside class hours gave them more time to reflect and review, therefore, it served as another scaffolding strategy.

Scaffolding in Asynchronous Discussion Forum. Analysis of data suggests that the instructor was actively involved in setting up scaffolds to raise awareness not only in the class but also in the online discussion forums. The online scaffolding efforts aligned with the three categories of teaching presence in CoI framework. There were 45 vignettes assigned to instructional design and organization, 52 to facilitating discourse and 48 to direct instruction.

Instructional Design and Organization. During the first cycle of AR in the first three discussion forums no attempt was made to further scaffold design method and the instructions were kept short because the purpose of the interaction during the first cycle of AR was to understand how much awareness learners had about the rubric components. This was important to know the individual and collective zone of proximal development (ZPD) of the learners at the beginning of the term before the real designs of action for change began.

The original design in the asynchronous peer feedback component consisted of using rubric criteria as a hook in nine forums to raise awareness. Based on the analysis of data collected in the first cycle, early in the second cycle, the instructor paid attention to scaffolding by giving instructions to specific groups to focus on the criterion assigned to them. Yet, a few learners were not fully engaged in the peer interaction as expected. The instructor had to set the climate for learning by repeating and clarifying the explicit and implicit goal of asynchronous feedback. The instructor posted the following in the forum and mentioned the same in the class:

... Nobody would be judged based on what you post on the discussion forum. Discussion forum is a place for noticing what others are doing. ...Your feedback would show what

you understand about the task and how it meets specific rubric criteria. ... The forum is a place for you to express your doubts and even to learn from mistakes.

As the discussion continued in the second cycle, various scaffolding strategies were implemented. For example, the instructor made decisions about how the content should be discussed and the kind of activities ideal to raise awareness about the criteria in the writing task assessment rubric. It was found that learners did not understand important vocabulary in the rubric, so the criteria in the rubric were broken up into smaller chunks and discussed in groups and as whole class. In the asynchronous discussion, the instructor also paid attention to assigning mixed ability groups where competent learners could act as the 'knowledgeable other' to assist other learners in the group who needed more help to understand the criteria. To make the discussion manageable, only one of the five criteria was assigned to each group as a prompt to guide their asynchronous peer feedback.

Another feature of scaffolding in asynchronous discussion forum was the quality and clarity of designing methods in each discussion forum. The discussion forums were made available the day before, and they were asked to give feedback to just one partner using the prompt related to the rubric criteria assigned to the group. The forum with names of participants was projected on the screen in the class, so everyone could read and ask questions during face-to-face class. The purpose of the discussion was restated in each forum. The instructor also often redirected the discussion to the content by asking such questions as: *What do you think about ...suggestion? How do you know if your task meets CLB 6 requirements? What are the FIVE aspects of your writing? ... In this task you were expected to recycle relevant vocabulary from ...*

Finally, there were instances where the instructor had to confirm understanding through assessment and explanatory feedback as seen in the following example:

I think L10 has mentioned the reasons. He also tried to be persuasive by making alternate arrangements. Probably, L10 should have used expressions to demonstrate how necessary it is for him to take the days off. As we noticed in the sample, modals of necessity could be used.

Facilitating Discourse. A significant number of scaffolds were tailored to individual or small group levels in the discussion forum. Often, the instructor's role was to make sure the knowledgeable other was present and was aware of the important role played in the group. Sometimes the scaffolding efforts in moving the discussion forward were simple comments such as "I guess L5 is waiting for your response" or by asking learners to provide more details as in "..., it would be helpful for L3 if you gave examples of sentences that need changes." With learners who needed further help in understanding the prompt, the instructor provided scaffolding with more details as in in the following post:

You could help L14 better reflect on his sense of audience in this email. For example, how did he connect with his boss? How did he start his email? What's the level of formality? We talked about this in the class in a previous task.

Further to this, in many instances, the instructor drew in participation, and prompted discussion when it was noticed the learners could continue knowledge construction although they met the requirements in a particular forum.

Thanks for the great discussion here... L20 has started a great discussion here. Let's try to take it to the next level. You could mention in a reply here how many paragraphs you would have and what the main ideas are ... Last week we discussed unreal conditional. Can someone rewrite the following using unreal conditional?

Similarly, when the discussion stalled because the learners had differences of opinion, the instructor joined the discussion to assure support is available. For example, the instructor responded to a learner who had difficulty including complex structures, “You are right. This task had limited scope to integrate a variety of structures. That's what we noticed during the analysis stage.” There were also occasions where peer feedback was only focused on the discussion in the class. In these situations, the instructor tried to clarify the expectations when completing the task as in the comments below:

Although we have completed many tasks where we had to compare and contrast, it is not a requirement in every task to achieve CLB 6. All that matters is that the tasks address the functions. If the tasks require you to compare, you have to. Otherwise, you don't ...

There were also occasions when the instructor had to join the peer discussion to seek to reach consensus with comments and questions as evident in the following posts:

I agree with both arguments. You may also want to consider the following... There are a couple of aspects of the rubric that neither of you have mentioned. What are they?

Other times, the learners simply needed encouragement, acknowledgement or reinforcement, so the scaffolding could be as simple as “You are very detail oriented! You are able to observe many aspects of CLB 6!” or “It is wonderful to see that most of you were able to provide constructive feedback. Well done!”

Direct Instruction. The data analysis provided evidence that among all categories and indicators of the teaching presence element in CoI framework, many instances of evidence was found in relation to improving or modifying direct instructions to raise awareness about the rubric criteria. This in turn better facilitated scaffolding because it enabled the instructor to act as a subject matter expert, helped to set the depth and tone of the intellectual climate, allowed

others to join the discussion before the instructor jumped in and channeled the discussion to possible areas of growth and delineated the focus of each discussion forum. Most of these indicators are discernible in each of the nine guidelines provided in the discussion forum. The guidelines for each forum were kept flexible to base them on the instructor's close attention to the details observed in previous weeks. Also, the amount of instruction faded away as the learners took responsibility for what they were expected to do in the forum. Examples of instructions given at the end of each cycle are provided in Appendix P.

In brief, the analysis of data shows a change in instructor behavior in the direction of enhanced scaffolding efforts during the seven weeks of action research. There were changes regarding instructional design and organization, facilitating discourse, and direct instructions during the task completion stages in the class and during the asynchronous peer feedback. The scaffolding efforts included strategies such as explaining the goals, drawing learners' attention to the importance of each of the task stages, adding rubric related report planning questions, simplification of rubric related terminology, explicit teaching of rubric related terminology, breaking up the criteria into manageable chunks, and helping learners use graphic organizers and rubric criteria as training wheels, grouping learners based on various language proficiency levels.

Finding 3: Learners Re-conceptualized Writing and the Role of Rubric

Analysis of the data suggests that a major effect of using the task assessment rubric in asynchronous peer interactions for seven weeks was the shift in learners' beliefs about writing and the role of task assessment rubric in writing. Early in the term, many learners focused only on certain aspects of writing such as form and accuracy whereas most of them at the end of the term used writing task rubric as a tool to guide them through meaning focused holistic approach to writing. Many learners, who considered writing as a product of individual effort early in the

term, began to approach writing as a collaborative, improvable and ongoing process of revising thoughts within a trusting environment. There were 11 selective codes from the second round of coding such as interactive, collaborative, cohesive, affective, asking, knowledgeable peer, individual, exploration, limited focus, and comprehensive focus assigned to this umbrella term 'reconceptualization' and the theme.

During the first three weeks of class, one of the challenges the instructor faced was getting the learners to focus on fluency as opposed to accuracy during the task writing stage. As a result, learners continued to have difficulty in completing the tasks on time. For example, in the second week the instructor noticed that only three out of 21 learners (15%) completed the task within the time allotted. They were expected to write a multiple paragraph email with details that could range 100 to 150 words in length in 25 minutes. Most of the learners had only half the length. As is the common practice in PELP program to encourage learners to improve fluency, the instructor reminded learners to stop writing and to focus on the report planning questions. However, an excerpt from the instructor's reflective journal in the second week reads as follows:

During the report planning stage many learners continued to write the task, and a few of them took washroom break. During the past few days, learners were seen checking the dictionary, continuing to read pre-task materials and proofreading their work for spelling, vocabulary and grammar as they wrote the task. They were supposed to do this during the report planning stage. Learners need help to focus on fluency.

It should also be noted that learners faced other challenges when they focused on accuracy during task stages instead of fluency. For example, when reporting their tasks and answering the report planning questions, learners had difficulty answering questions related to the holistic criteria in the rubric. When samples of tasks completed by the learners were

projected for reporting, classmates often proofread for spelling, punctuation, and grammatical errors. There were no references to other criteria such as organization, vocabulary, audience, content, and task completion. Learners also did not make any changes to their writing after the task stage. In the second and third week, learners were given the opportunity to make changes based on the debrief session after task reporting and the analysis. They kept reading the sample they got for analysis, but no one went back to their own task to make changes. When asked, a few students simply mentioned they had ‘finished’ the task. It appeared that these learners considered writing as a finite finished product. There was nothing to continue to work on, to improve or to modify.

After having identified the challenges in time management in completing the tasks, the instructor introduced and followed up many strategies including the preparation of outline before the task. There was great emphasis on time management and speed in writing in the third and fourth weeks. As a result, many students managed to complete the tasks on time. Learners were expected to reflect on report planning questions and ask questions to the instructor to improve their writing. The three learners who had questions from the beginning continued to ask for clarification, but nobody else. The instructor walked around and pointed out how they could make changes to the tasks they wrote or asked thought-provoking questions, so they could make changes. However, hardly anyone tried to edit their work. In the fourth week during the analysis stage when learners were completing the exercise individually, the instructor returned to a learner to whom suggestions for improvement had been made and asked:

Instructor: During the report planning stage, we talked about how you organized your paragraphs. We talked about having three paragraphs. In the sample you got in the analysis stage, there are three paragraphs. I see that you still have only one paragraph.

Learner: Yes, I have only one paragraph.

Instructor: ... Why didn't you make changes?

Learner: I'm done. I had no time.

This observation was consistent with the low level of awareness learners demonstrated about the writing task rubric criteria early in the course. On the second day of class when the assignments and the rubrics were introduced the instructor tried to elicit what they already knew about the rubric. In this activity the learners had to categorize CLB 5, 6, and 7 Can Do Statements, but only less than a quarter of the learners showed confidence in completing the activity. Therefore, the instructor had to show them the rubric and ask a few lead-in questions to prepare them for the activity. Although they could not name the document, when asked about the purpose of using the rubric in the course, many learners mentioned that it is a tool used by the instructor to 'give marks' on assignments. The instructor grew more curious and asked how they used it in the previous class. One learner responded, *"Well, I can see the marks....and I read the comments my instructor wrote."* Then the instructor asked how many of them used the rubric before and while they completed the assignments and tasks. Nobody responded to this question affirmatively.

A similar line of thinking was evident in the online peer feedback as well. For instance, during the first cycle when a learner pointed out what needs to be improved, the peer responded, *"Thank you for your suggestion. I always forget the correct form that I should use in my writing. I'll pay attention to it!"* and another one mentioned, *"I will try in the next task."* For these students, apparently writing is something that is 'finished' or 'done'. They did not see opportunities for improvement in the same task as outlined in TBLT stages.

However, through rigorous and consistent scaffolding of rubric criteria in the online peer feedback as well as the strategies promoted in following the six stages in TBLT daily face-to-face lessons, changes were evident in what learners viewed as writing and the purpose of completing a series of writing tasks throughout the course. In the second cycle a learner responded to a peer feedback: *“I will keep in my mind about letter of organization [sic] and I will review the part again.”* Different from the comment in the first cycle in which the learner mentioned she would ‘try’ in the following task, this response showed the learner was making commitment to go back to the same task. Further to this, in the final cycle of AR in the sixth week, a learner showed how she would make changes based on the feedback.

About sequencing in my writing, because I think as an experienced employee like my friend, I don't think I need to guide her on how to apply for this job online. Hence, I didn't sequence the steps like the two samples. ... Concerning the grammar points that you mentioned, when I checked them, I found out many errors in my writing.

Therefore, I will respond by ...

In the same week as the class was discussing the challenges they faced in the writing task, a participant shared the following with the class about the changes she had noticed:

Definitely, this task ... and the term is very challenging, but I'm happy because I know my writing is improving. I think I am learning a lot! My sister quit her main program last week. ...that's a lot of money.... She couldn't write all her assignments. It was difficult. I think if I continue to improve like this, I will be really ready for the main program...I'm able to write fast now... I can write a lot ...I need to write a lot in the main program... before I used to check for grammar and spelling all the time...I know there are still mistakes, but I feel better now ...and I used to write just for marks on assignments...

This student was able to see the value in focusing on fluency first and then accuracy. She was able to see the value in writing beyond the current task. The above comments resonated with another major shift noticed in the learners' conception of writing as a continuous process that needs to be revisited, revised, and improved. An excerpt from the instructor's reflective journal in the seventh week regarding the change in learners' attitude reads as follows:

... It was a joy watching them write the second last task in this course! It felt like a heavy load has been taken off my shoulders! During the first few weeks I had to give so many instructions and had to adopt so many measures to ensure my learners focused on fluency during the task stage and accuracy in later stages. ... Now they seem to have found the confidence to keep writing... They are least bothered about making mistakes...

The instructor noticed changes even in the pre-task. At least half the class was taking notes as they were discussing the pre-task. Although no specific instruction was given, all except two prepared an outline before they wrote the email. Many of them wrote the functions on their tasks, and many of them reviewed similar tasks in their binders from previous days. They regularly checked the clock for time as if it was their final examination. All except one finished the task on time, and surprisingly they all had about 100 to 150 words length.

The use of multiple strategies coupled with the shift towards learners' focus on meaning showed that they started to consider learning not only as a product but also a process.

Apparently, in the early weeks, learners focused on accuracy because the tasks are part of the assignment. During the class discussion a learner mentioned, *"I continue to write after the time allowed because I have to get good mark. You should give us more time to finish the task."*

However, as the term progressed, and learners engaged in peer feedback, their ideas also

changed. The same student who complained about not having enough time in the second week had a different opinion in the seventh week when she reported her task to the class:

I was able to finish the task today. I have all the functions in my task... my grammar is not good I need more complex sentences.... If I have more time, I can include a few more and make it CLB 6....

This comment about task completion suggested that this student might have started to see writing as a process where improvement is always possible. As the term progressed, learners began to consider task stage as the time to ‘draft’ their thoughts in the outline they prepared before they started writing. Learners asked many questions to the instructor during the report planning stage, and they actively edited their work based on the triggering questions posted. Many of them brought color pens instead of erasers and whiteouts to review their task.

This holistic view showed the learners’ attitude towards the writing task rubric also had changed over the weeks. More than half the class had the rubric on their desks when completing the tasks in the class in the final weeks. When learners were discussing their tasks in groups, one learner was seen showing the rubric to his group to mention his partner’s tasks did not have adequate complex structures. When answering the report planning questions to the class, one learner projected his task and the rubric side-by-side and showed the class how he probably met the task requirements in all but one rubric criteria. This was the same student who responded to the same question in the second week, “*How do I know? I’m not a teacher!*” This shows the use of rubric changed his attitude towards learning. He has started assessing his own progress using the rubric as a learning tool.

Another shift noticed during the seven-week long action research as suggested in the data analysis is learners’ understanding of writing as a community of inquiry as opposed to the notion

of collecting information from the instructor. The instructor engaged learners in face-to-face in-class activities and online discussion during the first two weeks to build on the positive collaborative learning environment. In the first week, every lesson started with fun activities to get to know each other until everyone had a chance to be introduced to the class. Students also introduced themselves on the Discussion forum by answering several cues suggested by the instructor. In the second week, the instructor introduced language games such as “line up” and “tic-tac-toe” to continue with the notion of community building. In general, students seemed to enjoy the activities. When explaining the concept of ‘knowledgeable other’, the instructor mentioned, “*Remember, we have 23 instructors in this class; not one instructor and 22 learners.*” Learner responses in the following weeks proved they took the message seriously.

During the first cycle of online interaction in this action research, learners demonstrated various aspects of social presence. In the affective category, learners used emoticons to express themselves. Signs of humor, and even willingness to disclose self by presenting details of their weaknesses in writing and learning skills were evident as in these online comments: *I'm not good at computer... I didn't have enough time to give a suggestion or recommendations in my email,* Learners also expressed their emotions about not having enough time to complete in-class tasks and about not getting adequate on-line feedback from peers. “*Thank you for comment on my writing. I was trying to follow the functions, but I didn't complete well enough because time is short for me to write.*” In addition, from the very beginning, some learners indicated signs of open communication. They used the ‘reply’ features on the Discussion forum rather than starting a new thread, quoted, or referred to tasks completed by other learners, asked question, invited suggestions, complemented, expressed appreciation, and agreed with suggestions provided. Finally, there were a few references that demonstrated group cohesion. For example, learners

addressed each other by their names or greeted everyone in the group as ‘everyone’ and shared their likes and dislikes engaging in online discussions.

Similar signs of community of inquiry were evident in the face-to-face class as well.

The instructor’s journal entry in the second week reads as follows:

Social interaction generally seemed to be friendly, and learners got along well. Although to a limited extent, there were positive signs of affective, interactive and cohesive elements of social presence in the class... However, social presence automatically disappeared when the class settled down for learning purposes.

The positive characteristics of social presence were not capitalized into learning particularly at the beginning of the term. In most cases, learning seemed to be instructor to individual or instructor to whole class daily transaction. Most of the stages in TBLT required learners to engage in pair and group discussions during various stages each day. It was noticed learners were not naturally prone to sitting in groups or depending on others for their learning. Even after group and individual roles were assigned, there was reluctance from learners to engage in discussion, and they would not start the discussion unless they were personally directed to do so. If they had doubts, they would not ask their groupmates, but directly to the instructor.

During the second and third weeks as part of the task reporting debrief session, the instructor talked about the advantages of group discussion and group work in TBLT, and about how curriculum is designed in Canadian classrooms. With samples of tasks completed by the learners, the instructor showed the class how different learners already demonstrate strength in certain aspects of writing. The instructor also pointed out that in a mixed ability group with diverse learning backgrounds, some are strong in organizing ideas while others were good at

paying attention to audience and levels of formality. Some had good store of context appropriate vocabulary while others demonstrated better understanding of a variety of grammatical structures. The instructor explained the concept of the presence of ‘knowledgeable other’ in the class and the idea of learning from each other in TBLT classes and how the online peer feedback would help them to learn better and more from each other.

During the second cycle there was remarkable improvement in learners’ attitude towards the concepts of community of learners. There was more willingness to be part of group work in the class and online. During the report planning stage learners turned to each other for clarification. They demonstrated more commitment to each other, and there was improvement in the quality of ideas shared. Learners also commended each other on tasks well done and expressed appreciation for the feedback they have been receiving as seen in these comments: “*I so appreciate your feedback. Hope we will be better next time,*” and “*Thank you for your suggestions.*” The data showed that as the term progressed, they moved away from chit-chat and sounded more professional in word choices and the expressions they used. One learner even mentioned about reading and following up all the comments posted by classmates:

I like to read feedback that you write for some other classmates. I will implement your suggestions when I write a task. Your suggestion will help me to complete in-class tasks.

During the third cycle of online interaction learners were more focused as they continued to demonstrate and take advantage of various aspects of social presence. They expressed their appreciation for the feedback they received from each other. One learner posted, “*Thank you for your suggestions, I will focus on my complex sentence.*” Another learner commended her peer for the tasks well completed and even reference earlier task. She wrote, “*It is impressive how your ability to write has improved in comparison to previous task. As a classmate I congratulate*

you and I am proud of you.” Yet another learner expressed agreement and disagreement on the feedback received in this post: “... *I don't know why you think that 'whereas' is better than 'while'.*” Towards the end of the third term, most of them moved beyond friendly chit chat to use the forums for learning as is evident in the following comment in the sixth week:

I was really reading well your writing because I did not have an idea about my writing. However, I knew how I should write a cover letter from you. ... Because I didn't say anything about information I just said, you can go to this website for applying. Do you think I should change it?

Some of them also made the discussion more interactive by directing the questions they could not answer themselves to the instructor by asking such questions as, “*Regarding the preposition, I think both of them (good in and good at) are correct. We need to ask (our instructor) to make sure a correct answer.*”

In short, data analysis suggested that the learners’ beliefs about writing and the role of task assessment rubric in writing changed because of asynchronous peer feedback. Beliefs about writing as a product of individual effort shifted to writing as a process requiring fluency and collaborative effort. Also, learners at the beginning of the term considered task assessment rubric a teaching tool; however, as a result of the online peer feedback, learners considered the rubric as a tool to direct their holistic approach to writing.

Finding 4: Feedback Increased Rubric Awareness and Competency in Writing

The third theme that directly answered the second research question regarding the effects of using task assessment rubric in asynchronous peer interaction was the strong interface noticed between learners’ level of awareness about rubric criteria and their competency in writing tasks.

When employing mind mapping technique across the data in the first-round open coding, the second round of selective coding that included the categories in CoI framework, and the criteria in the writing rubric from the first cycle of action research supported by the observation notes, many codes pointed to the relation between learners' awareness and competency in writing. Codes such as explores, integrates, resolves, understands, applies, explains, detailed, asks, and responds were collapsed to include the umbrella terms 'awareness' and 'competency' and the resulting theme. All the vignettes and tasks from each round of coding were thoroughly analyzed to understand the connection between awareness about rubric criteria and competency in writing.

Analysis of data about rubric awareness painted a complex picture regarding the nature of the knowledge acquired in this action research. Overall, the presence of verbalizable knowledge in online peer feedback increased over the seven weeks, and it indicated that the participants developed metalinguistic knowledge of the criteria in the rubric. As shown in Figure 5 above, the data indicated that the participants' performance in writing in all five criteria was significantly better than that demonstrated in the first cycle, indicating the learners developed awareness about the rubric criteria at the level of understanding. This theme is presented below with selected vignettes for each of the five rubric criteria from learners' online peer feedback and instructor's journal entries as well as samples of in-class writing tasks.

Organization. In general, there was a gradual increase in the number of instances of references to the criterion regarding organization of ideas in the second round of coding related to cognitive presence across the three cycles of scaffolding of action in this research. There were a total of 28 references in the first cycle, 35 in the second cycle and 40 in the third cycle. These references were present in triggering events, exploration, integration, and resolution categories in the cognitive presence element in CoI. As they progressed through the peer feedback, they

demonstrated deeper understanding of the criterion, and they were able to apply it intuitively in the vicarious tasks.

In looking closely at the qualitative data from the first cycle, it was evident that most of the learners had no to low level of awareness about the organization criteria in the rubric at the beginning of the course. For example, two comments that best demonstrated learner's understanding of the rubric criteria in the first cycle was "*However you should divide your paragraph. It makes more easy [sic] to read your writing*" and "*I think you improved your writing so far because your email is organized well and adequate follow writing rubrics. Keep it up!*" It should be noted that these comments parallel the discussion that happened in the class before the learners posted their feedback. In these comments, the learners were able to identify the key words and ideas in the rubric criteria about organizing ideas in their emails and letters, but they were not able to verbalize the details about the criteria to help peers perceive the nature of the problem from these triggering events.

During the second cycle there were 35 nodes referencing organization of ideas in the writing tasks. One slight improvement noticed in the peer feedback was that many learners were able to extend their ideas about organizing ideas. For example, as can be seen in the following comments, learners used expressions such as paragraph structure, main ideas and paragraph length in their peer feedback.

I would like to suggest you to review the paragraph structure, maybe by summarizing the main ideas contained in the first paragraph ...you may wanna work on your organization and will give more clear idea to audiences.... but I think if you write more in your each paragraph, it will be better.

In the final cycle of asynchronous peer interaction, learners were able to further construct

meaning from the ideas about organization of ideas generated by the triggering events. Some students started to assess the applicability of their understanding of the rubric criteria in their peer's tasks and provided feedback. Many more learners were able to extend their ideas about organizing ideas with more explanation. For example, as evident in the following comments, learners used expressions such as transition words, paragraph structure, main ideas and paragraph length in their peer feedback.

About appropriate use of connective words and phrases, you could try (to) include transitions (words) in your writing ...reading your task I have find that it's appropriate about the long and structure of paragraphs. ... Your writing is good, and the main idea is good too. However, I think if you add more information, I can understand your writing. ... Furthermore, in the first paragraph, you introduced and mentioned the main ideas to compare and contrast, so to develop them in the second paragraph, I don't think you can start with the transition word "similarly". Similarly, in the last paragraph, because you don't develop the main idea from the first paragraph, you shouldn't start with "finally"

In the final comment above, the learner identified how the paragraphs were organized in his peer's writing task and made suggestions. It shows the learner was able to integrate ideas from the previous discussions within the community of inquiry in the class and online.

Analysis of organization of ideas in the final task completed by all the 20 learners in each of the three cycles showed that 9 (45%) learners met or exceeded CLB 6 requirements at the end of the first cycle, 14 (70%) at the end of the second cycle and 19 (95%) at the end of the third cycle. Appendix Q shows samples of tasks completed by the same learner in each of the three cycles, and improvement in organizing the ideas in emails is evident.

Even after discussing for the first four days the details about organizing ideas in separate paragraphs, the learner included only two paragraphs in the first sample above, but in the email completed during the second cycle, the learner was more careful to have separate paragraph to introduce the main idea in the first paragraph, to provide more details in the second paragraph, and to close the letter in the third paragraph. In the third sample, the learner not only separated the paragraphs to develop ideas but also used transition words. This learner was able to effectively resolve the problem in this task considered to be a vicarious action in the learning process in TBLT.

Grammar. There was dramatic increase in the number of instances of references to the criterion regarding grammatical structures in the second cycle of coding related to cognitive presence across the three cycles of action in this research through scaffolding. There were 25 references in the first cycle, 35 in the second cycle and 45 in the third cycle. These references were present in triggering events, exploration, integration, and resolution categories in the cognitive presence element in CoI. In looking closely at the qualitative data, it was evident that most of the learners had no to low level of awareness about the grammatical structure criteria in the rubric at the beginning of the course. However, as they progressed through scaffolding in peer feedback, they demonstrated deeper understanding of the description and application of the criteria about grammar.

All the feedback comments in the first cycle focused on specific error correction, but none of them mentioned about including complex structures which is the most important requirement in this criterion specific to CLB 6.

You need to use some prepositions like check (up) ...but in the second paragraph you have a wrong fragment problem... I found sometimes you wrote in capital letters incorrectly... You use so, but you did not use comma before the so.

However, the feedback on the tasks completed by their peers during the second cycle of action research demonstrated more targeted use of key words from the rubric. These words and expressions included complex sentences, simple structures, spelling, punctuation and capital letters. One learner even counted the number of complex sentences in her partner's task.

I would like to suggest you try to include complex sentences in your writing.

Regarding good control of simple structures, I think your writing showed it using transitions and fanboys. About spelling and mechanics, I would like to recommend you review some words, punctuation and capital letter. For example (knowledge, mentioned and requires). On the other hand, I have encountered 5 complex sentences in your work. Maybe, you can use another connector besides "so" ...

Further signs of improvement in awareness about the rubric criteria about grammar were noticed during the third cycle of asynchronous interaction. In addition to mentioning the type of grammatical structures required to meet CLB 6 expectations, many learners were able to explain with details why some structures are more appropriate in certain tasks depending on the functions in the task. The following comments illustrate this improvement in awareness.

In the first paragraph, when you write: "I am writing this letter because I am interested", I think that maybe you can change "because" for "to express". It has no sense to use a conjunction like "because". In this particular case, the person who receives the letter knows that you are writing because you are interested. Good use of "so" to introduce the explanation of your experience...

When responding to the feedback comments, learners demonstrated they were thinking about complex sentences while completing the tasks but had difficulty doing so.

... Your suggestion is very helpful, yes, in second paragraph, when I wrote the sentences, I had no idea how to combine them to some complex sentences.

I think I cannot use 'So' because I used (wanted to use) complex sentences.

Analysis of the use of appropriate grammatical structures in the final task completed by all the 20 learners in each of the three cycles showed that 8 (40%) learners met or exceeded CLB 6 requirements at the end of the first cycle, 12 (60%) at the end of the second cycle and 19 (95%) at the end of the third cycle. The three samples of tasks in Appendix Q completed by the same learner in each of the action cycles in this study show how the learner was able to progressively apply her understanding of the rubric criteria related to grammar in her tasks.

During the first cycle, she included two complex sentences, but there were many more opportunities to combine sentences using subordinating conjunctions if she were aware of the importance of doing so. However, in the email completed during the second and third cycles, she tried to join as many clauses as possible. This was the first course in the PELP program, and she had asked a few questions about complex structures during report planning stage during the second cycle. It is important to note from these samples that she used several grammatical structures newly learned or reviewed in previous lessons in the new vicarious tasks without being directly told. This learner was able to effectively resolve the problem related to grammatical structures in this task considered to be a vicarious action in the learning process in TBLT.

Vocabulary. During the nine weeks of asynchronous peer feedback, there were a total of 21 references in the first cycle, 14 in the second cycle and 30 in the third cycle related to the rubric criterion vocabulary. In the first cycle, the feedback was mostly at a proof-reading level

related to word choice or word forms rather than the description of the criteria on the rubric or the feedback they received in the class. The feedback did not fully address the criteria, but learners showed some signs of exploring the criteria by reading peers' tasks and making suggestions. The feedback that best depicts their understanding of the rubric criteria relates to appropriate context specific vocabulary for the task, but there was no explicit use of the metalinguistic language in any of the comments during the first cycle.

Maybe there are some vocabulary problems in the mail such as 'hard worker' 'up-date'
In second paragraph it is better to use 'the other one' instead of 'otherwise.' I think it has different meaning... Remember that (our instructor) gives us some vocabulary before the task, try to implement it next time.

During the second cycle the feedback included specific examples that showed the learners who provided the feedback must have applied the idea in their own writing.

However, if you write with the vocabulary relevant to the task, your email will be better.
For example, clientele, asset, etc.... in your letter you use the vocabulary from the job posting such as interpersonal, communication, organizational skills, but you didn't mention some responsibilities of this job. You can use some words from the job posting.

The data showed that during the third cycle many learners had become aware of what it means to use appropriate vocabulary. Learners' comments ranged from the choice of words to word forms with specific examples of words their peers used and could use in the tasks.

...in your letter you used the vocabulary from the job posting such as interpersonal, communication, organizational skills, but you didn't mention some responsibilities of this job. You can use some words from the job posting... I think the vocabulary about the job responsibilities and qualifications is important in a cover letter. It is also a big challenge

for me that the vocabulary in my writing is not adequate to the task. ... You used the new vocabulary borrowed from pre-task reading such as intensive, pursue.

Analysis of the use of appropriate vocabulary in the final task completed by all the 20 learners in each of the three cycles showed that only 11 (55%) learners met or exceeded CLB 6 requirements at the end of the first cycle, but 17 (85%) at the end of the second cycle and 18 (90%) at the end of the third cycle. The three samples of tasks in Appendix Q are evidence of how learners tried to demonstrate fuller understanding of the rubric criteria by applying their awareness of vocabulary requirements in the series of tasks they completed in the class.

One of the challenges learners in general had from the beginning of the term was to understand what makes vocabulary adequate in a particular task. The discussion earlier in the term both in class and online focused on using task related vocabulary specifically from the pre-task. One of the goals in TBLT is to develop vocabulary by encouraging learners to express the message within a particular context. Learners were often reminded to take risk by using comparatively newer words and expressions, and many triggering events were posted on the discussion forum to this effect. As evident in the samples above, as the term progressed, most of the learners took notes during the pre-task and tried to use more appropriate context specific vocabulary in their tasks. Since they were also able to include more details, they became comfortable using a range of vocabulary in each task. Learners demonstrated better skills in proofreading their own work for related aspects such as word choice and word forms. As was the case with criteria related to grammar, learners recycled vocabulary from previous tasks when the vicarious tasks provided opportunities to do so.

Audience and Content. The greatest number of comments in the entire asynchronous peer feedback was related to appropriateness of language used and content in the tasks. There

were 38 references in the first cycle, 39 in the second cycle and 52 in the third cycle. During the first cycle, most of the comments lacked in-depth understanding, but some feedback explained why the task should have more details or should be more formal. Many simply mentioned there should be more details, but a few students also explored the ideas by asking questions back to their peers and by making suggestions for improvement. A few students made comments about the level of formality appropriate for the task and audience:

I would like to mention that you should avoid contractions form in your writing.

I think your email is good, but you need to add more details.

You have a good situation and you included lots of information about this situation.

During the second cycle there were 39 nodes referencing rubric criteria about audience and content in the written tasks. Learners also provided specific examples to demonstrate they were able to integrate information required in the task. One improvement noticed in the peer feedback during the second cycle was that many learners were able to extend their ideas about audience and content in their writing. For example, as can be seen in the following comments, learners used expressions such as polite, audience, details, appropriate, and functions. They provided positive and constructive feedback, so their peers could make necessary changes.

I think you could write more polite [sic]. For example, I think instead of write [sic] “to organize better my work” you could write “I will be appreciate [sic] if you give me response as soon as possible.” But the information you provided was not sufficient and appropriate to give you leave on those days. The reasons were missing... I like the reason you mentioned in your email. If I were your supervisor, I probably would accept your request right away. I think you did a good job of comparing and contrasting and

provided the details about the two hotels, adequately meet the requirements about the task.

In the third cycle, in addition to what they were able to do in the second cycle, peer feedback helped learners to review own work for appropriateness of the content, and to defend the position they had adopted in their tasks as evident in the following comments:

About the education I mentioned in my cover letter, I think it is very necessary because I exceed the expectations of this job (at least a high school diploma). Moreover, I stated that I have had five years of experience in customer service and good communication skills, those are my assets as they did not request to have sales experience.

Analysis of appropriate sense of audience and inclusion of adequate content in the final task completed by all the 20 learners in each of the three cycles showed that 9 (45%) learners met or exceeded CLB 6 requirements at the end of the first cycle, 15 (75%) at the end of the second cycle and 18 (90%) at the end of the third cycle. The three samples of tasks in Appendix Q completed by the same learner in each of the three cycles are evidence of how learners tried to demonstrate fuller understanding of the rubric criteria regarding audience and content by applying their awareness in the series of tasks they completed in the class.

One of the challenges learners in general had from the beginning of the term was to adjust the level of formality according to the audience in their writing tasks. They also had difficulty addressing each of the expected functions and in including sufficient details for each of them. As is evident in the vignettes and samples above, learners demonstrated an increasing level of awareness about this rubric criterion as the term progressed, and they were able to apply their understanding in the vicarious tasks.

Task Completion. There were 98 peer feedback comments in the asynchronous peer feedback related to task completion including 21 references in the first cycle, 37 in the second cycle and 40 in the third cycle. In the first cycle, the feedback on rubric criteria related to task completion was mostly at a low level of awareness. The comments were mostly about meeting the task expectations. They mentioned if their peers addressed all the functions that were written on the board during the pre-task stage, or at the best they listed the functions they could notice in the completed tasks as seen in the following examples of peer feedback:

In my opinion, your task is totally interesting because you included all the functions.

I think that you did a good job [sic] you apologized and explained the situation.

There were many learners who had not completed the tasks within the allotted time or had missed the expected functions, but nobody commented on this in the discussion forum.

In the second cycle learners provided more details about what the requirements for each task are and included some details about how to address them. Some of them mentioned about addressing all the functions, adding more details to expand on the functions, and seeking clarification ahead of the task stage.

... I guess that yesterday you did not focused [sic] on the functions especially persuading.

The persuade [sic] was general like giving just information to your boss is not enough persuading

... Clearly, you made the request (I would like to request...); you gave the reasons (spring break, your child can not stay home alone...); you expressed your necessity (I need to ...); you persuaded your boss by the sentence "I am able to work overtime...).

Good job!

In the third cycle learners who commented on task completion demonstrated higher levels of awareness about the expectations by providing further details. For example, in the following vignette the learner wrote a paragraph to provide feedback and referred to each of the five criteria in the rubric except for vocabulary.

Your task is most probably CLB 6, as you have written 4 paragraphs. You have also written some complex sentences, but your grammar is not proper formed in the sentences. It's not totally CLB 6 in some points there are some mistakes like sentences structure, grammar & spelling mistakes. You wrote 3 paragraphs which is good for CLB6, in third paragraph you should write thanks for suggestions me for taking PELP program and you wrote the sentences in a different way. You gave good reason for making evening classes. I think your writing is adequately meet [sic] the requirements for this task.

Analysis of the rubric criteria regarding task completion in the final task completed by all the 20 learners in each of the three cycles showed that 8 (40%) learners met or exceeded CLB 6 requirements at the end of the first cycle, 15 (75%) at the end of the second cycle and 18 (90%) at the end of the third cycle.

The three samples of tasks in Appendix Q provide evidence of how learners tried to demonstrate fuller understanding of all five rubric criteria by applying their awareness in a series of tasks they completed in the class. Individual learners had varying levels of difficulties in meeting the rubric criteria at the beginning of the term. Also, not everybody had the same challenges with the five criteria; some learners showed absolutely no understanding about the rubric itself, but some learners were able to demonstrate skills in some aspects of the rubric. Some learners had explicit knowledge about some of the rubric criteria, but they needed time to demonstrate their awareness in the vicarious tasks. In the first sample that the learner completed

during the first cycle, she demonstrated good understanding of paragraph structure in emails, but still needed to work hard on other criteria to meet CLB 6 requirements. In the tasks she completed in the second and third cycles, she demonstrated higher levels of awareness in each of the criteria. The learner was able to demonstrate only a low level of awareness at the beginning of the term, but as she continued to participate in online peer feedback and in-class discussions, she was able to apply her understanding in vicarious tasks more effectively and exceeded CLB 6 expectations in every rubric criterion.

In brief, as a result of using task assessment rubric in asynchronous peer feedback, learners' explicit awareness about all the five rubric criteria as well as their competency in writing tasks increased dramatically. Learners were able to verbalize the rubric criteria clearly and fluently, and their ability to apply their awareness about the criteria in tasks significantly improved in all the five criteria over the seven weeks of asynchronous feedback.

Summary

In this chapter I described the findings from the analysis of the data collected in this action research, connects the analysis back to the research questions, and demonstrates consistency of the analysis with qualitative research methodology. Twenty learners participated in this seven-week long action research that consisted of three iterative action cycles. Participants provided peer feedback using the criteria in the writing task assessment rubric on the tasks posted on the asynchronous discussion forum in nine stages. The qualitative data was collected from selected in-class tasks completed by the learners as well as the observation notes and journal entries.

Qualitative data analysis for this study consisted of open coding, selective coding and thematic coding using NVivo12 software. The process resulted in 78 codes from open coding

and 32 codes from selective coding. Four themes emerged from further analysis of these codes: (a) learners had a low level of awareness about the rubric at the beginning of the course, (b) teaching presence focused on scaffolding, (c) learners re-conceptualized writing and the role of rubric, and (d) asynchronous peer feedback increased rubric awareness and competency in writing. In Chapter V I focus on the summary for the critical analysis and discussion on these four themes.

CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION

This practitioner action research project was undertaken in response to the realization that many adult international and immigrant learners attending English as Additional Language (EAL) fast-track classes that follow Task Based Language Teaching (TBLT) curriculum designed around task assessment rubrics had difficulty following the criteria outlined in the rubric. Many learners attending the PELP program were new to learner centered classrooms, and they were challenged when they were required to use rubrics as guidelines for leveraging their own language learning process (Andrade & Du, 2005). The purpose of this action research was to explore with a class of learners how asynchronous peer feedback using writing task assessment rubric could promote language learners' awareness about the rubric criteria and thereby improve competency in writing.

The objective of this chapter is to reconstruct a holistic understanding of the outcomes of this action research in relation to the research questions, and to provide interpretive insights into the findings presented in Chapter IV in the context of the related literature. In this chapter I also include the implications for theory, practice and research resulting from this study, make recommendations based on the limitations, and provide a summary.

Scope and Context of the Study

This classroom action research was undertaken at a post-secondary institute in Western Canada that uses a complex set of assessment rubrics based on Canadian Language Benchmarks (CLB) as the framework for course development, teaching, learning and assessment. As an instructor who has taught these task-based English language courses to hundreds of adult international and immigrant students, it had come to my attention that most of the learners were new to the concept of using rubrics for learning and assessments. They were not aware of the

specific criteria in the rubric and the importance of using them to complete their tasks and assignments. As a result, they continued to be challenged when completing learning tasks and assignments with expected language competency. In order to raise awareness about the use of rubrics criteria, action research was employed as a methodological approach with 20 participants in a CLB 6 reading and writing class. The following questions were pursued.

RQ1: What is the nature of the awareness language learners have about writing task assessment rubric at the beginning of the TBLT course?

RQ2: What are the effects of using writing task assessment rubric in asynchronous peer feedback in an adult TBLT course?

The theoretical framework that drove this study was the belief that language learning is an inter-mental and intra-mental phenomenon mediated in social and cultural contexts, so social interaction is necessary for language learning (Vygotsky, 1978). Hence, in this action research in the hope of raising awareness about the writing task assessment rubrics, in addition to the regular task-based lessons, learners engaged in asynchronous discussion and provided feedback to each other on the tasks completed in the class. Selected tasks were posted to the discussion forum in the course website, and learners were encouraged to use the criteria in the rubric to provide constructive feedback. This study incorporated Community of Inquiry (CoI) framework developed by Garrison et al., (2000) to design and analyze the nature and quality of critical discourse and reflection in digital learning environments.

The ‘action’ in this action research was carried out in three cycles over seven weeks. Sources of evidence in this qualitative study were collected from the text created by learners during the asynchronous peer interaction, samples of tasks completed by the learners in the class, and instructor observation notes and journals of class and discussions in progress. The data was

coded, analyzed, and organized in three stages by research questions, rubric criteria, and categories and subcategories guided by the Community of Inquiry (CoI) conceptual framework adopted in this study. Four themes emerged from the thematic analysis of data: (a) learners had a low level of awareness about the rubric criteria at the beginning of the course, (b) teaching presence focused on scaffolding, (c) learners re-conceptualized writing and the role of rubric, and (d) asynchronous peer feedback increased rubric awareness and competency in writing. The first theme answered the first research question about the nature of the awareness learners had about the task assessment rubric at the beginning of the course, and the other three themes answered the second question about the effects of asynchronous peer interactions using writing task assessment rubrics in TBLT.

Interpretation of the Findings

The discussion in this chapter is directly aligned to the two research questions in this study and the findings presented in Chapter IV. While analyzing data in the previous chapter, I primarily looked for patterns within and across the categories as well as the themes that emerged to tell the story of my research. However, in this chapter, to reconstruct a more holistic understanding, the themes are compared to issues raised by relevant literature presented in Chapter II to provide interpretative insights into the findings.

For deeper understanding of the findings and to flesh out the meanings that underlie each finding, an interpretation outline suggested by Bloomberg and Volpe (2016) was developed and used. This tool was helpful in questioning each finding by asking ‘why’ and ‘why not’ and prompted all possibilities that could explain the findings. The problem-posing dialogues in this tool enhanced critical inquiry, deepened understanding of the experience, and enabled a logical development and explanations of my interpretive thought process. The explanations derived from

these dialogues became the basis of the discussion in this chapter. This logical development of ideas and systematic search for rival or competing explanations is believed to have established the credibility of the discussion (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016). The following sections depict a more integrated picture of the themes through layered synthesis. The first theme answers the first research questions, and the other three themes answer the second question.

Learners Had a Low Level of Rubric Awareness at the Beginning of the Course

The finding in this study that learners had low level of awareness about the rubric at the beginning of the course agrees with the historical literature about SLA and awareness in many ways. A significant congruence can be found with Knowles' (2020) conclusion that adult learners from traditional teacher centered learning environment have challenges adjusting to learner-centered classroom environment. As Knowles points out, in traditional pedagogy as was the previous background of the PELP participants in this study, the learner as a dependent individual, used to rely on instructors to provide learning topics, determine when topics are learned, and declare if the learning was successful. However, in collaborative andragogic approach as in the PELP program, learners are expected to transition from dependency toward increasing self-directedness. Similar challenges faced by international and immigrant learners regarding unfamiliarity with the principles and practice of western-style critical thinking have been pointed out by many other researchers in the field (Burnapp, 2006; Durkin, 2008; Roessingh, 2006). The finding in this study further supports their suggestions to train the learners through critical thinking process.

Also, the finding that learners had low level of awareness about the rubric at the beginning of the course supports Krashen's (1981, 1982, 1985, 2003) acquisition-learning hypothesis claims and Schmidt's (1990, 1993, 1994a, 1994b, 1995, 2001, 2010) noticing hypothesis in SLA,

and it is consistent with many other studies in SLA that have reported learning without awareness is possible (Leung & Williams, 2012, 2014; Paciorek & Williams, 2015a, 2015b; Rebuschat & Williams, 2012; Rebuschat et al., 2013; Rogers & Rebuschat, 2015; Kerz, et al., 2017). During the first cycle, only about 25% of the learners in this study were able to explain with some details what the rubric criteria meant, but about 50% of the learners were able to apply their acquired knowledge in the vicarious tasks they completed in the class. Although 75% of the participants were exposed to similar rubrics and TBLT for two to four months in the previous courses, they could not verbalize the knowledge they had acquired during this period. This could be further support for Krashen's (1985) argument that explicit language learning and metalinguistic awareness has no to minor role in SLA.

However, other researchers (Rosa & Leow, 2004; Schmidt, 1994) pointed out the facilitative role of consciousness in SLA. It is possible that learners in the TBLT curriculum that focuses on acquisition of language were able to progress through the previous courses by applying grammatical, textual, functional, sociolinguistic knowledge and strategic competence (Bachman & Palmer, 1996; R. Ellis, 2008; Skehan, 2016). They probably went through the complex process (Long, 1985a) of meaning making (Prabhu, 1987, 1990), and used language for real purpose (Swain, 2013). Although they may have noticed input in the rubric criteria, they did not have to demonstrate their learning about the terminologies in language and the rules that govern them (Schmidt, 1995).

The finding that only a few learners in this study could verbalize to explain the criteria in the rubric at the beginning of the course while a higher number of learners were able to demonstrate their understanding in vicarious tasks probably points to the suggestion that these learners were able to make conscious registration of the input they received in their previous TBLT courses

that they were able to transfer to long-term memory to readily use the implicit knowledge (DeKeyser, 2015; R. Ellis, 2005; Rebuschat & Williams, 2012; Schmidt, 1995). Repeated use of the rubric in tasks and assignments might have resulted in the change from item language to deeper level of abstraction related to meaning making.

Finally, the finding in this study that only about half the learners were able to apply their acquired knowledge in the vicarious tasks at the beginning of the course points to the significant role of consciousness in facilitating second language acquisition suggested by Schmidt (1995). The finding that they neither could verbalize their understanding of the expectations as outlined in the criteria nor apply it in the tasks validates Schmidt's (1995) argument that learners may not have become aware of the input at the level of noticing or understanding. It is probable, for these learners the noticing happened at the level of perception wherein the input had been registered without any conscious awareness. Schmidt (1995) along with other cognitive psychologists (Perruchet, 2008) even questioned if perceiving could be considered learning since the effect of the information processed is subtle and difficult to explain or verify.

The first finding is further evidence that noticing at the level of perception does not result in learning. Schmidt's (1995) noticing hypothesis also stated that although noticing at the level of understanding may have facilitating role, it is not necessary for SLA; however, awareness at the level of noticing is a necessary and sufficient condition. The other possibility is that learners may have noticed the rubric features, but it may not have been long enough to transfer the input to long-term memory to readily use it as implicit knowledge. As researchers have pointed out (DeKeyser, 2015; R. Ellis, 2008; Rebuschat & Williams, 2012; Schmidt, 1995), acquisition of implicit knowledge takes an extended period.

Teaching Presence Focused on Scaffolding

Another effect of using task assessment rubric in asynchronous peer feedback in this action research was the change in the role of the course instructor that evolved during the research period particularly in scaffolding the rubric criteria for facilitating effective in-class task completion and online interaction. The results of this study reiterated the significance of the presence of the instructor in scaffolding (Gibbons 2015; van de Pol et al., 2010) in three inter-related categories of teaching presence in CoI: (a) instructional designs and organization, (b) facilitating discourse, and (c) giving direct instructions (Garrison et al, 2000). The overlapping theme in all these sub-categories of scaffolding efforts was the inference that the instructor's active presence as the 'knowledgeable other' (Lantolf, 2000; Lantolf, Poehner & Swain, 2018; Vygotsky, 1978) during in-class and online activities was a key factor in raising awareness about the task assessment rubric criteria. A combination of ongoing online and offline scaffolding efforts was essential to meet the three dimensions of scaffolding operationalized by van de Pol et al. (2010): contingency, fading and transfer of responsibility.

The first characteristic of scaffolding facilitated by the instructor was contingency. The finding that the instructor had to be flexible and adaptable in supporting groups and individual learners is in harmony with the literature related to contingency in scaffolding for learning purpose (Maloch, 2008; Myhill & Warren, 2005; Nathan & Kim, 2009; Oh, 2005; Rodgers, 2004). For example, Oh (2005) suggested that the scaffolding had to be adjusted to the learner's present state of understanding. In this action research, before incorporating the online component, I spent the first three weeks trying to diagnose and understand the state of awareness learners had about rubric criteria. Resultantly, as recommended by van de Pol et al. (2010), I was able to help learners to take charge of their own learning and to interfere only when the learners

might otherwise not be able to accomplish the goal. Since 75% of the participants in this study had attended previous classes, and thereby had been exposed to TBLT and task assessment rubrics, the instructor could have taken for granted that the learners had explicit knowledge about the rubric criteria. The dynamic assessment of the learners' explicit and implicit knowledge in the first cycle was important in relation to scaffolding as previous research has shown (Lajoie 2005; Macrine and Sabbatino 2008; Pea 2004; Shepard, 2005).

Responsiveness from instructor in facilitating both synchronous whole-class-scaffolding in the class and asynchronous peer feedback in this study helped to overcome the limitations mentioned in Nathan and Kim (2009), and Myhill and Warren (2005) studies. The former mentioned it was difficult to adapt to the cognitive complexity level and the latter reported the challenge faced by the instructor having to attend to 30 students. The online discussion helped to address the challenge of working collectively with individual ZPDs and multiple whole-class ZPDs which involve working with multiple layers of understanding and skills (Myhill & Warren, 2005).

The instructor provided tailored responses to individuals online and calibrated the responses for multi-level learners. The instructor facilitated low-low, low-high, and high-high pairing of learners to maximize the ZPDs as well as to resolve rubric related problems posed in the discussion forums (Niu et al., 2018; Strijbos & Dünnebier, 2010). The triggering events the instructor initiated in the class demonstrated responsiveness to what was happening whereas the questions and comments the instructor posted online were tailored to the specific level of individual learners. For example, the rubric criteria were explained explicitly in the class within the context of the tasks completed in the class, but they were simplified and broken down to smaller parts for groups of learners in the discussion forum. This way the instructor's support

was constantly adapted to the current level of the learners' performance. It is important to highlight how the discussion forum as a tool facilitated guided talk and enhanced ZPD in this study. Like Abtahi's (2018) finding, in this study ZPD emerged through interaction between individuals as well as tools.

The second characteristic of scaffolding facilitated by the instructor is the gradual withdrawal or fading of the scaffolding (van de Pol et al., 2010) as the AR intervention and the course progressed. As the data in this study supports, the number of support and the amount of support the instructor provided both in-class and online gradually decreased as the participants moved through the nine discussion forums during the three cycles of AR. The instructor was very active on the discussion forums to set up the instructional designs early in the intervention cycles. Most of the triggering events were set in motion by the instructor early in the course. Once the learners became familiar with the explicit and implicit features and goals of the discussion forum, the instructor's focus switched to facilitating the discourse.

As the learners in groups became more comfortable interacting with each other, the instructor's focus also further spiraled to the next level of helping learners to engage in discourse that would result in integration and construction of meaning and resolution of dilemma by applying their new awareness in upcoming tasks. As the instructor's presence faded away intentionally, it was found the level of dependency on the instructor also decreased over time. For example, in the last discussion forum the instructor stayed away from triggering events and only attended to clarification questions they could not solve themselves. As operationalized by Maloch (2002) this kind of gradual handover of responsibility is one of the key features of scaffolding.

The third characteristic noticed in the instructor's scaffolding effort was the transfer of responsibility to learners, and it resonates with the features of scaffolding described by Reigosa and Jimenez-Aleixandre (2007). As the term progressed in this study, learners were encouraged to take more responsibility for their own learning. They were expected to demonstrate their expanding levels of understanding of the rubric expectations in their own vicarious tasks as well as in their peer's tasks through feedback. For example, in the final week, the instructor listed fewer task functions and did not pre-teach during the pre-task.

Similarly, although in the second cycle, questions were added for each of the rubric criterion in the task reporting stage, there were fewer questions in the third cycle. In fact, in the final tasks and the discussion forums the only question posted was about meeting the task requirements. Learners were independently expected to refer to the rubric for details. Reigosa and Jimenez-Aleixandre's (2007) study could not provide evidence for learners' independence due to the difficulty level of the tasks, but in this action research although the tasks were more challenging at the end of the course, almost all learners were able to independently engage in explicit description of rubric criteria in asynchronous discussion and successfully complete the tasks.

This development was not the result of a single scaffolding strategy in a single task, but several strategies across a series of tasks and asynchronous peer interactions. These scaffolds provided opportunities for the instructor to teach contingently, paved way to fade the support over time, and allowed the transfer of responsibility to the learners to take control over their own learning. Learner independence emerged as the cumulative effect of many diagnostic and responsive actions (Jantien, 2013) over seven weeks in this study. The consistent use of rubric that incorporated learning outcomes helped the instructor to focus on the criteria by which

learning was assessed (Brookhart, 2013). While focusing on individual learners, the rubrics helped the instructor to promote classroom assessment of learning as a product of co-regulation by teachers, learners, instructional materials, and contexts (Andrade & Brookhart, (2020). The instructor's attention was on what and how participants should learn as opposed to what should be taught, and thereby rubrics improved instruction. Besides, benchmarking of students' performance by using the rubrics allowed the instructor to review the effectiveness of teaching strategies, and to adapt teaching to learner needs and learning pathways (Andrade, 2006; Wong, 2007).

Participants Re-conceptualized Writing and the Role of Rubrics

The consistent use of the rubric related scaffolds in the class and online, facilitated a shift in learners' beliefs about writing and the role of the rubric in the curriculum. Learners' dynamic beliefs and actions changed through discursively constructed interactions (Abtahi, 2018; Barcelos, 2003a, 2011; Peng, 2011) over the seven weeks of action research, and they were able to develop new beliefs as well as change their actions. Research shows that within sociocultural theoretical framework, beliefs can be considered as a specific type of cultural artefact and mediational tools (Alannen, 2003; Aragão, 2011). In this study, learners used beliefs as a mediational tool and appropriated (Wertsch, 1997) their new beliefs about writing and assessment rubrics, which reduced non-participation characteristic of international and immigrant learners (Rao, 2017). This in turn improved their proficiency in writing, and enhanced confidence.

As the data analysis suggests, early in the term, most of the learners believed they should focus on form and accuracy while the TBLT curriculum they followed had a focus on meaning and fluency in writing eventually leading to accuracy. Also, at the beginning of the course, most

of them thought writing is a product of individual effort whereas the program promoted writing as collaborative, improvable and ongoing process. These two beliefs triggered opposite actions from the learners when completing the writing tasks, but as a result of the intervention, the beliefs and actions shifted over the course of this action research. These findings further support the findings of Navarro and Thornton (2011), Yang and Kim (2011) and Yoshida (2013) that have validated learners' appropriation of new belief.

These findings particularly align with Yoshida's (2013) claim that L2 learners can have conflict between their beliefs and actions when using the target language in the classroom context, but these learners can change their beliefs or actions to overcome the conflict. For example, Yoshida's (2013) study examined how Japanese language learners perceived a conflict between their beliefs and actions when speaking the target language in the classroom context, and how these learners changed their beliefs or actions to overcome the conflict. Through intervention, it was found the learners developed their confidence, restructured their beliefs and actions, and solved the conflict to speak Japanese more frequently in the class.

Similarly, in the current action research, most of the learners early in the term believed in the importance of accuracy in their writing, so they mostly engaged in proofreading their work for any mistake when they were expected to focus on fluency in writing. As a result, they were not able to finish the tasks on time. Also, many learners considered writing as a product of individual effort early in the term, so they did not take help from others during the other stages to reflect on what they did during the task stage. They did not make connections between the stages, and they were not able to benefit adequately from these stages in TBLT.

In the current study, through scaffolding activities the instructor integrated into the task stages and in the online peer feedback forums, learners were able to interact with their

classmates, build knowledge and become more confident. As observed in Ghaffar et al.'s (2020) study, in this study the use of rubric enhanced levels of learner interaction and engagement both in asynchronous and in-class discussions. The new scaffolding initiatives within the community of inquiry framework helped learners to develop the required confidence, and thereby facilitated the development of new beliefs about writing. Learners became aware of the significance of paying attention to various stages in TBLT as well as the importance of focusing on all the five criteria in the task assessment rubric. Consequently, they started focusing on fluency and accuracy, and they began to approach writing as a collaborative, improvable and ongoing process of revising thoughts within a trusting environment. They were not frustrated when they made mistakes or when they did not finish the task because they realized they could learn from their own mistakes without feeling embarrassed (Yoshida, 2013).

Peer Feedback Increased Rubric Awareness and Competency in Writing

This qualitative action research investigated the effects of asynchronous peer interaction using the writing task assessment rubric in an adult TBLT course. One of the most significant outcomes was the automatization of explicit knowledge about the rubric criteria that contributed to remarkable improvement in the writing competency level in each of the five criteria in the rubric. This finding is further support for the current literature in SLA regarding the facilitative role of automatized explicit knowledge on implicit knowledge (DeKeyser, 2015; N. Ellis, 2005, 2015; R. Ellis, 2008; Hulstijn, 2002; Paradis, 2009; Kerz et al., 2017; Schmidt, 1995, Suzuki & DeKeyser, 2017).

In the current action research, data analysis indicates that the asynchronous peer feedback facilitated the acquisition of automatized explicit knowledge about the rubric criteria. Several researchers in SLA have theorized that a distinct characteristic of automatization is that even

when the access is rapid or automatic, using automatized explicit knowledge involves consciousness; learners must pay attention to the linguistic forms (Suzuki & DeKeyser, 2015, 2017; Vafae et al., 2017). The CoI framework (Garrison et al., 2000) employed in this study facilitated higher order learning by involving their awareness about the rubric criteria in peer feedback. The analysis of critical thinking as a process and a product in the asynchronous peer interaction through the lens of the four categories of cognitive presence in the CoI framework helped to understand the process and the quality of deep and meaningful understanding (Garrison et al., 2004) of the rubric criteria the learners were able to acquire.

The scaffolds and triggering events initiated by the instructor in the context of the tasks posted by learners helped the participants to perceive the nature of the problem related to rubric criteria. Subsequently, when providing feedback to peers upon reading the tasks, they moved to a fuller exploration of relevant information about the rubric criteria by repeatedly moving between discourse (shared world) and reflection (private world) in the community of inquiry. Peer feedback was an opportunity for students to demonstrate their own thinking, and the responses meant that either the instructor or the peers were paying attention, challenging their thinking (cognition) and pushing them to do their best work (Ahn, 2016; Stevens & Levi, 2013).

As the learners progressed through the second and third cycles of AR, most of the learners advanced to a level of integration in CoI where they constructed meaning from the ideas generated in the previous phase by considering how the ideas could be applied (Garrison et al., 2004). During integration phase, students continued to move between the private and shared worlds (Vygotski, 1978) and further developed deeper awareness about the rubric components. The repeated use of rubric criteria in the online peer feedback and during the task stages in the class helped to draw learners' attention to the details throughout the course. Learners' ability to

engage in spontaneous peer interaction both online and in class at the level of integration with relevant examples and detailed explanations demonstrated the presence of automatized explicit knowledge about the rubric components.

In this action research, the daily TBLT writing tasks learners completed in the class were opportunities for learners to demonstrate their implicit knowledge in 'real time' (Suzuki & DeKeyser, 2017) by applying their awareness about the rubric criteria. In the research design, it was considered the resolution phase in the cognitive presence element in CoI framework. Critical thinking as a product (Garrison et al., 2004) could be indirectly judged from how well the learners applied their awareness in the purposefully constructed daily tasks (Stevens & Levi, 2013). Analysis of data indicated that there was dramatic improvement in the participants' competency in writing in all five criteria over the seven weeks. This implied that learners had also developed implicit knowledge about the writing task rubric criteria.

The findings that learners acquired both explicit and implicit awareness about rubric criteria while advancing through the triggering events, exploration, integration and resolution phases in CoI, would explain the current views on explicit and implicit learning and the interface between them. Rebuschat (2013) and Williams (2009) argued that explicit learning is both conscious and intentional. Besides, Rebuschat & Williams (2012) posited that explicit learning likely leads to explicit knowledge, and Godfroid (2016) found that implicit instruction primarily affected implicit knowledge. Although in the current study the CoI framework allowed learning to be conscious and intentional, the view that explicit learning leads to explicit knowledge can be problematic. Meaning-focused learning in TBLT is not altogether intentional and explicit instruction, but incidental and implicit as well. The cognitive presence in the online discussion was less about explicit instruction by the teacher, but more about meaning-focused triggering

events, exploration, integration and resolution by learners. At the same time, the flexibility in meaning focused TBLT allowed the instructor to toggle between explicit and implicit instructions as situations warranted during the task stages in the class, and this must have resulted in learners acquiring both implicit and explicit knowledge.

In fact, studies have shown that implicit and explicit knowledge may develop simultaneously during instruction (DeKeyser, 2009; Dienes, 2011; Paradis, 2009). This is even more possible during the pre-task, task and post-task phases in TBLT. Although in meaning-focused teaching contexts implicit instruction is characterized by an absence of rules or rule search instructions (Hulstijn, 2005), the goal of leading learners through task-reporting and analysis stages is to help learners to infer patterns and rules. Therefore, a better explanation for the type of change in awareness that happened in this study could be that one type of knowledge can also transform into another through processes such as automatization (DeKeyser, 2015), analysis (Bialystok, 1994) and insights (Williams, 2009). A combination of face-to-face and online interaction using the same rubric must have facilitated all these processes working together simultaneously. All the 28 tasks completed in the class and the 9 discussion forums provided the extensive time and practice they needed for automatization of knowledge. Being exposed to various scaffolds of rubric criteria in class and online over seven weeks, it can be speculated, the learners paid close attention to the salient features in the rubric criteria which according to N. Ellis (2015) and Paradis (2009) might have been picked up gradually by the implicit learning system.

Furthermore, in each of the nine discussion forums, learners had to analyze the rubric criteria in response to the tasks posted by their peers. In each of the task they completed in the class, they had the opportunity to resolve the dilemma posed by the tasks by using their insights

from previous tasks and discussions. The opportunity for learners to apply their understanding in the daily vicarious tasks in PELP fast-paced course must have accelerated the pace at which learners accumulated both automatized explicit knowledge and implicit knowledge. Suzuki and DeKeyser (2017) argued that in situations that warrant comprehension and production in real time communicative interaction, at least partially automatized explicit knowledge is necessary. Otherwise, learners will not be able to effectively attend to the relevant input. In task-based language learning contexts as in the PELP program, real life scenarios are created where learners are expected to use authentic language and problem-solving strategies.

The data from online peer feedback and in-class interaction indicated that the instructor's repeated scaffolding efforts enhanced the target criteria in the input that further promoted noticing, and subsequent acquisition of the target proficiency. It is plausible the automatized explicit knowledge helped learners to frequently use the features accurately which in turn results in accumulation of input feeding into implicit learning system (DeKeyser, 2015; N. Ellis, 2015; Paradis, 2009; Suzuki & Dekeyser, 2017). This flooding of input (Sharwood, 1991) increased opportunities to notice the features of the rubric criteria during the action cycles, and learners developed and demonstrated greater awareness of the underlying features.

In conclusion, by engaging in asynchronous peer feedback learners acquired explicit automatized knowledge about the rubric criteria at the level of understanding. Learners also significantly improved their competency in writing which indicated a strong interface between explicit and implicit awareness. Learners who developed awareness at the level of understanding performed significantly better in the use of the language than those who did not develop it.

Implications for Theory

The purpose of this qualitative action research was to raise adult language learners' awareness about various aspects of the task assessment rubrics in a TBLT class where awareness about rubric was considered critical to teaching, learning and assessment practices. The primary goal of raising awareness about rubrics was to make task assessment rubrics meaningful and relevant for learners to achieve expected language proficiency in writing. This awareness raising process that required learners to engage in critical thinking was viewed through the lens of sociocultural theory (Vygotsky, 1978) and actualized within Community of Inquiry (Garrison et al., 2000) framework. To the best of my knowledge, the current qualitative action research is the first attempt to examine the effects of using writing task assessment rubric in asynchronous peer feedback to raise awareness about the rubric criteria in an adult TBLT class for teaching English as an additional language. Also, this is the first qualitative attempt to use CoI framework in a naturalistic L2 acquisition setting to investigate the interface between learner's level of awareness about task assessment rubric criteria and competence in writing. As a result, the four major findings in the study while showing consistency with current theories in SLA have theoretical implications for second language acquisition, particularly in TBLT. However, due to the novel constructs and approaches in this study, the results should be regarded exploratory than explanatory, and the theoretical implications should be interpreted cautiously.

Although previous research has shown that adult learners from traditional didactic classroom environments face challenges when having to switch to learner centered and self-directed environment where they are required to think for themselves (Knowles, 2020; Kumar, 2013; Roessingh, 2004), this study is the first attempt to specifically understand adult international and immigrant L2 learners' challenges in adapting to rubric centered TBLT curriculum. The finding

that most of the learners at the beginning of the course had very low level of awareness about the writing assessment rubric criteria draws attention to the significant need for further focused scaffolding in a holistic approach to language learning (Langdon & Pandor, 2020) for international and immigrant L2 learners in learner-centered and outcome-based curriculum designed around rubrics.

The finding reiterates that rubrics are not entirely self-explanatory (Gezie et al., 2012) particularly for international and immigrant language learners, and highlights the importance of unpacking the various components in the assessment rubric (Andrade, 2005; Bharathuram, 2015) if learners should benefit from this reflective tool. Rubrics should help learners to notice the input to continue advancing their language abilities or to grasp linguistic features. Assessment rubric-based curriculum is designed around the concept of classroom assessment as the co-regulation of learning by teachers, students, instructional materials, and contexts (Andrade & Brookhart, 2020). Therefore, if learners do not have adequate awareness about the rubric criteria, the basic principles in employing the rubric in the curriculum are likely compromised.

The study also contributes to a better understanding of the vital role played by the instructor in raising learners' awareness in learner centered TBLT. Although researchers in the past (Cooper & Scriven, 2016; Kazanidis et al., 2018) have used CoI framework to facilitate online learning, no study prior to this has reported using the three categories of teacher presence namely instructional design and organization, facilitating discourse, and direct instruction (Garrison et al., 2000) in TBLT to define and facilitate the assistance learners needed through the three dimensions of scaffolding: contingency, fading and transfer of responsibility (van de Pol et al., 2010). In this effort, the repeated use of the same rubric in asynchronous peer feedback helped the instructor to review the effectiveness of teaching strategies (Andrade, 2006; Wong, 2007).

Since the learning outcomes for the course were already defined by the rubric criteria, the use of rubric served as a guideline for what to focus on (Brookhart, 2013).

The study showed that in a learner centered TBLT curriculum, the instructor does not take the back bench. Focus on learners does not diminish the instructor's role. On the contrary, this study indicated that while allowing the learners to take ownership for their own learning, the instructor played an active and essential role as the 'knowledgeable other' in building, adjusting, and moving the scaffolds around to suit the needs of individual language learners (Gibbons 2015; van de Pol et al., 2010). The finding reiterates that teacher is key (Roessingh, 2004) when it comes to bridging the gap between the East and the West.

This finding about the significant role played by the instructor has wide range of implications for instructors who teach international and immigrant L2 learners who are used to teacher fronted traditional classrooms. First, the effectiveness of the significant role played by the instructor lies in the design of this study for the specific context. A combination of mostly whole class scaffolding (Smit et al., 2012) in the face-to-face class and mostly individual asynchronous scaffolding efforts complemented each other, and it was significantly effective in PELP classroom where learners from diverse linguistic and learning background have a common goal of advancing their proficiency in English as an additional language. Although self-regulation is expected from adult language learners, evidence in this study support that the instructors must be creative, contingent, and adaptable with scaffolds (Maloch, 2008; Myhill & Warren, 2005; Nathan & Kim, 2009; Oh, 2005; Rodgers, 2004) particularly when international and immigrant learners are getting accustomed to a totally new approach to learning as in the PELP curriculum. At the same time, instructors should exercise caution as L2 learners new to

learner-centered approach are likely to feel very comfortable with the personal attention they receive from the instructor.

This study provides further support for the instructor presence to fade away gradually (Maloch, 2002) for the scaffolding in ZPD to be effective. As found in this study, the gradual fading of teacher presence helped learners to recognize the self and other classmates as the ‘knowledgeable other’. This realization in turn helped to achieve one of the main purposes of this study which was to enable learners to take responsibility for their own learning in a curriculum that requires critical thinking and collaboration. The fading of scaffolding in asynchronous discussion helped the instructor to understand when exactly the responsibility for own learning can be transferred to individual learners. In brief, this study showed that curriculum developers and L2 classroom practitioners can incorporate the element of teaching presence in CoI framework in asynchronous peer feedback and in the face-to-face class to effectively navigate through appropriate stages of scaffolding in SLA.

Another implication involves the role of the action research design adopted in this study in re-conceptualizing learners’ beliefs about writing and the role of the rubric over the seven weeks. This study was designed as action research because this approach views reality as dynamic and changeable by human agency (Nicholas & Hathcoat, 2014b). My goal as an investigator in this study was to bring new realities into being through reification (Nicholas & Hathcoat, 2014b). As the third finding suggests, early in the term, most of the learners believed they should focus on forms and accuracy in writing, but during the seven weeks of AR it shifted to meaning and fluency that eventually led to accuracy as well. Secondly, at the beginning of the course, most of the learners believed that writing is a product of individual effort; however, at the end of the term their belief changed to writing as a collaborative, improvable and ongoing

process. Thirdly, at the beginning of the term, learners considered rubric as an instructor tool for assigning marks; however, there was a shift in their beliefs about rubric as a tool to guide their learning.

As studies have suggested (Burke, 2009; Evans, 2013), awareness about assessment criteria can be fully understood only in the context of learner and instructor beliefs about learning itself. The current study points to the need for learner involvement in open discussion about rubric criteria as well as a platform like the asynchronous discussion forum for learners and instructors to explicitly share their competing understanding of rubric criteria.

At the same time, it is important to note that the appropriation of new beliefs did not occur instantly through analysis or insights. On the contrary, the instructor by constantly paying attention to the components of cognitive, teaching and social presence in CoI had to bring about this change gradually. Multiple cycles of action research design in this study must have led to a cyclic chain reaction where they refined their interaction skills, improved proficiency in writing, and developed confidence as they progressed through the term. Within socio-cultural framework the learners had to negotiate first through inter-mental collaborative activities in asynchronous peer feedback and then through intra-mental activities mainly in the problem focused tasks to make this shift in belief. As evident in this study, the use of task assessment rubric in online peer feedback and in-class tasks have the potential to provide structure and direction for the appropriation of learners' new beliefs. L2 classroom practitioners and researchers could employ the AR design in this study or adapt it for specific contexts to help learners develop new beliefs through inter-mental and intra-mental activities during the process of SLA.

Finally, the current study contributes to better understanding of implicit and explicit knowledge about writing task assessment rubric criteria and the significance of the interface

between them. One of the most important finding in this study was that participants were able to acquire automatization of explicit knowledge about the rubric criteria through asynchronous feedback. This finding is significant considering the remarkable improvement in the writing competency level in each of the five criteria in the rubric over the seven weeks. As in previous studies (DeKeyser, 2015; N. Ellis, 2005, 2015; R. Ellis, 2008; Hulstijn, 2002; Paradis, 2009; Kerz et al., 2017; Schmidt, 1995; Suzuki & DeKeyser, 2017) automatized explicit knowledge must have facilitated acquisition of implicit knowledge. However, different from previous studies that mostly targeted the nature and effect of explicit and implicit knowledge about specific grammatical structures or semantic features in artificial or semi-artificial quantitative studies, this study explored if learners could apply their awareness about the rubrics in the tasks completed in a natural TBLT learning environment. Instead of separating the various factors that affect TBLT, this study embraced the complexity of balancing the focus on meaning as well as forms through an ecological approach (Langdon & Pandor, 2020; Svalberg, 2012).

As reported earlier, the finding suggests that automatized explicit awareness (Suzuki & DeKeyser, 2015, 2017; Vafae et al., 2017) about rubric criteria seems to have played a vital role in acquiring competencies in writing. This strong interface between explicit awareness (DeKeyser, 2015) about the rubric criteria and their competency in writing could be attributed to the scaffolding of cognitive, teaching and social presence as outlined in CoI framework. Also, it could be speculated that one type of knowledge may have transformed into another through processes such as automatization (DeKeyser, 2015), analysis (Bialystok, 1994) and insights (Williams, 2009).

The conceptual framework adopted in this study was extremely helpful in answering the research questions and thereby achieving the research purpose. By introducing a novel action

research design that incorporated elements of CoI framework in a natural L2 learning environment, this study made an important step toward raising awareness about writing task assessment rubric criteria and improving competency in writing. The conceptual framework helped to lay adequate emphasize on cognitive presence, teacher presence and social presence both in the asynchronous peer feedback and face-to-face TBLT class. The need for facilitating cognitive presence to raise explicit awareness about rubric criteria was particularly informed by the literature on SLA. Similarly, the need for teacher presence and social presence to facilitate cognitive presence through interaction with the ‘more knowledgeable other’ to bring about change in learner beliefs was informed by the literature on SCT.

Additionally, the opportunity for learners to apply their newly acquired automatized explicit knowledge in iterative daily tasks in TBLT facilitated the development of implicit knowledge leading to improvement in writing competency. Different from the original plan in the conceptual framework, as part of the scaffolding efforts, more questions targeting the rubric criteria were added and small group discussions were facilitated in the report planning stage in TBLT during the second cycle of AR.

Implications for Practice

This action research sought to find practical solutions to the challenges adult international and immigrant language learners faced in adapting to rubric guided intensive task-based language learning environment. The results show that the intervention was successful in raising awareness about task assessment rubric and in improving proficiency in writing. Therefore, the findings in this study have significant implications for practice.

As the overseas student enrolment continues to surge, and as there have been very few studies that have analyzed how international students cope with education, the results from the

current study have great significance. Ranked the third top destination for learning, Canada welcomes thousands of students each year who contribute billions of dollars to its economy and support thousands of jobs. In addition to sustaining the business, institutions who admit these students have an ethical obligation to understand the specific context and unique needs of these learners and to take an active role in helping them to succeed in their academic pursuits. This study could be considered an attempt at institutional and practitioner levels to resolve the conflicts PELP learners faced regarding their lack of awareness about using the task assessment rubric to guide their language learning, and it helped to better understand the wider concepts underlying the East versus West dichotomy in education. This action research provided a practical solution to understanding the ways in which adult second language learners adapt to learner-centered education by using rubric.

The results from this study also show that well-designed assessment rubrics can be used as a practical tool to improve critical thinking and self-regulation of learning in second language classes. The study emphasizes the importance of integrating task assessment rubrics in teaching-learning process, ongoing formative feedback and summative assessments. Since the rubric criteria were linked to the learning outcomes specified in the PELP curriculum, throughout this action research intervention, teaching and learning remained focused. The critical thinking components embedded into the rubric provided a framework for learners and the instructor to engage in asynchronous feedback, and the learners were able to notice at a deeper level various aspect of the writing rubric criteria. Thorough understanding of how the course is designed around rubric helped learners to take initiative for their own learning. By developing critical thinking skills, international and immigrant learners will be more persistent in their academic

pursuit in a potentially unfamiliar learning environment, and they may complete post-secondary education with more academic stability and confidence.

Moreover, the finding that the course instructor played an indispensable role in raising learner awareness about the rubric criteria in this action research has many implications for practice in language education, particularly in TBLT. The finding showed that the focus on learners in TBLT does not diminish the keen focus instructors should have in every stage in TBLT. Just as in the didactic approach, instructor's proactive presence is imperative in learner-centered approach. The instructor may not be a sage on the stage, but still a seasoned sage-maker by the side. As noticed in this study, the three CoI categories of teaching presence help to facilitate second language acquisition through effective scaffolding.

Furthermore, this study highlights the significance of TBLT instructors assuming the role of interpretivist action researchers in daily classroom practice. By engaging in this action research, I was able to understand the difficulties learners faced in a specific local context, and I was able to design and implement strategies for improvement. The qualitative methodology in this action research assisted in maintaining design-flexibility and facilitated interactivity between the researcher and the participants and thereby led to social construction of new multiple realities. As evident in this study, raising awareness about rubrics involved the active creation of mental structures and not mere passive internalization of information acquired from others or from the environment. The spiral of self-reflection in this AR has helped me as an educational practitioner to view AR as a sustainable professional development opportunity. Succinct and comprehensive cycles of AR adopted in this study supported my learners with appropriate levels of scaffolding. The current study reiterates the importance of practitioners in learner-centered language

programs going beyond daily tasks and embracing the profession as an opportunity for spiral of reflection and ensuing progress through ongoing research and action.

Finally, there are implications for practice related to the finding that learners re-conceptualized beliefs about writing and the role of the rubric through asynchronous peer feedback. This study shows that the change in beliefs resulted from the completion of a series of tasks and simultaneous online interactions with peers and the instructor. The use of asynchronous discussion forum had significant effect on the design and execution of the three cycles of action research because the forum has the potential to facilitate appropriate levels of cognitive, teaching and social presence. Resultantly, learners can develop new beliefs through inter-mental and intra-mental activities.

Recommendations for Practice

The purpose of this action research was to help adult international and immigrant language learners to adapt to rubric guided intensive task-based classroom environment. All the four findings in this study point to several possibilities for practitioners in SLA.

The first finding that learners from traditional classroom environments had very low level of awareness about the writing assessment rubric criteria emphasizes the need for bridging the gap between didactic and constructivist approaches to languages learning particularly for international and immigrant adult learners. Educational institutions offering rubric-guided learning experience should seriously consider implementing strategies to consider prior learner experience when admitting international and immigrant learners in their programs. When learners are required to make the switch from didactic learning environment to learner centered approaches, adequate support should be provided in the form of scaffolding. Instead of immersing them directly in the new learning environment, a gradual approach that blends

features of prior learning experience would help learners to adjust and adapt to the new learning environment.

Moreover, in language programs such as the PELP where new learners can be directly enrolled in any level (based on placement test), the scaffolding efforts should start at macro-level curriculum planning to determine what instructors should or should not do in each course. Programs should also consider designing and integrating special learning modules within language courses that would familiarize learners with salient features of learner-centered education. These modules could include both content and strategy training to develop critical thinking skills. Finally, through professional development opportunities, practitioners in language programs such as the PELP that accepts international and immigrant learners should be encouraged to think beyond daily tasks and embrace their profession as an opportunity for spiral of reflection and ensuing progress through ongoing research and action. After empowering the practitioners, they should be offered the flexibility within the boundaries of wider program goals to bridge the gaps experienced by learners.

Also, the finding that the course instructor played a proactive role in raising learner awareness about the rubric criteria in this action research draws attention to the need for micro-level minute-to-minute interactional support in learner-centered language classrooms. Learners are expected to take responsibility for their own learning; however, if they are new to a learning environment that requires critical thinking skills, the instructor should provide the support system required to advance through the zones of proximal development. As evident in the current study, learners can move beyond what they can do on their own only with the support system that can consist of a variety of elements such as the instructor, peers, tasks and asynchronous feedback. Through contingency and timely fading stages in scaffolding, learners

should be ultimately helped to achieve autonomy in learning. As learners become more responsible, instructors should fade into the role of a mentor and facilitator of knowledge rather than a dominant expert in the class. To facilitate effective scaffolding, course instructors should also have awareness about various dimensions of scaffolding and be equipped with scaffolding tools appropriate for second language acquisition. Finally, a deeper understanding of CoI framework including cognitive, teaching and social presence elements and their categories will enable instructors to effectively manage communication for ideal ZPDs.

Another recommendation for second language educators would be based on the finding that learners re-conceptualized beliefs about writing and the role of the rubric through iterative cycles of action research. When helping international and immigrant learners to integrate into learner-centered environments that require critical thinking, it is important to do it over a period. This study shows that the change in beliefs did not occur because of information sessions, but through completion of a series of tasks as well as prolonged and dynamic interactions with peers and the instructor. It is recommended that curriculum designers incorporate these elements throughout the course to encourage learners to express their evolving understanding of their new belief systems. In this regard, a platform like the asynchronous discussion forum has the potential to unleash creativity for curriculum designers, instructors, and the learners. The forum can be used to facilitate and evaluate cognitive, teaching and social presence in CoI and thereby help learners to develop new beliefs through inter-mental and intra-mental activities.

Finally, there are recommendations for second language educators and TBLT practitioners who focus on developing communicative competency. The finding in this study showed that through asynchronous peer feedback the participants were able to concurrently acquire both automatization of explicit knowledge about the rubric criteria and writing competency. This

finding reiterates the importance of focusing on both meaning and form in TBLT. Focus on meaning in SLA does not diminish the need for focus on metalinguistic awareness in fast-track language programs like the PELP. Although language acquisition is possible with awareness at the level of noticing, awareness at the level of understanding as seen in this study hastens the speed at which second language acquisition occurs.

However, an ecological approach to language learning should be facilitated by allowing learners to complete the tasks in a natural real-life-like setting that helps learners to attend to the assessment rubric criteria through whole-class and small group discussions. As designed and implemented in this study, simultaneous asynchronous peer feedback can be incorporated into the course to allow learners go through triggering events, exploration, integration, and resolution stages of critical thinking process within CoI framework. This recurring process of task completion and asynchronous peer feedback would result in both automatized explicit knowledge and communicative competency in writing.

Limitations

This action research marked the first qualitative attempt to investigate awareness raising strategies using CLB writing task assessment rubric online and face to face within CoI framework in a naturalistic TBLT second language acquisition setting for the entire duration of a course, so it has opened several scenarios for future research. Although the findings reported in this study align with several current SLA research, they should be considered in the light of its limitations.

One of the limitations in this study is the validity of the measures targeting explicit and implicit knowledge of the rubric criteria and learners' competency in writing. All except one participant who was identified to have learning challenges were assessed to have strong exit

CLBs in the course. Being the first study using the specific constructs in this action research, findings in this study should be interpreted cautiously and regarded as exploratory within the specific context by considering aspects of constructs that could be further controlled.

The exit CLBs in each cycle and second round coding of asynchronous feedback transcript against CLB descriptors were calibrated by certified CLB assessors, but the dramatic improvement noticed in learners could have been influenced by factors other than the in-class and on-line scaffolding efforts initiated by the instructor. For example, many participants had attended previous PELP courses, so they were already familiar with the curriculum and the rubric at least at perception level. Strategies used by the previous instructors in conjunctions with the research measures adopted in this course might have had some positive effects on the learners.

In this action research, everyone was encouraged to participate, and the data was analyzed collectively due to issues related to grouping for the knowledgeable other and anonymity of participants. It would be valuable to analyze the change in awareness in each learner by factoring their diverse learning background and learner characteristics such as individual differences, personal traits, cognitive abilities, self-regulation, self-efficacy, age, and first language. These factors might have influenced the stability of implicit knowledge measures (DeKeyser, 2012; Phakiti et al., 2013; Suzuki & DeKeyser, 2015). Future research could also look at data separately for participants who are new to the program, and participants who have similar entry level explicit awareness about rubric.

Similarly, this study did not consider how power struggle typical of small group discussions in ESL classes (Kayi-Aydar, 2013) might have affected scaffolding and asynchronous peer feedback. Kayi-Aydar's study showed that in scaffolded group interactions,

power relations can exist and shape interactions. In classroom settings, it is possible that power relations enable certain students to gain control over the actions of others and their learning opportunities. When learners interact in small groups, outspoken students may dominate the discourse, and thereby become owners of knowledge. When there is power struggle between the dominant and less responsive group members, scaffolding could be less effective or even fail. Studies with control groups and quantitative measures of automatized explicit knowledge and implicit knowledge would further validate the findings in this study.

Another limitation was the use of CoI framework and the categories in cognitive presence criteria to measure awareness at the level of noticing and understanding. If participants did not respond or only responded within triggering and exploration categories without details, they were determined to be ‘unaware.’ If they responded with some details in the exploration and integration, their level of awareness was considered at the level of noticing. If learners were able to apply their awareness in the tasks they completed in the class, they were determined to be ‘aware’ at the level of understanding.

However, there could be other methodological limitations due to structuring of the instruments for data (Iliev, 2010). In this study the data was collected primarily from the asynchronous peer feedback. The design and organization of the discussion forum might have prevented participants from posting their feedback on the discussion forum. They might have had difficulty with understanding of the requirements, the use of media, and time constraints. Instead of requiring everyone to post text-based peer feedback, learning experience could be enhanced by incorporating multimedia that would provide opportunities for multiple means of engagement (Avgousti, 2018; Johnson & Lock, 2018). It is also recommended to keep the online peer feedback component gradable course assignment to keep every learner motivated and focused

from the very beginning of the course. Otherwise, AR might become unsuited for people who are unwilling to work democratically (Iliev, 2010).

Also, there was a limitation in this study related to the duration of the three cycles of action research that had to align with the seven-week long course. Although explicit knowledge can be acquired within a short span of time, acquisition of implicit knowledge requires longer period (R. Ellis, 2008). It would have been valuable to continue the research through further iterative cycles of action research with the same learners in the following level to understand how long the automatized explicit knowledge could be sustained or if it would be transferred to long term memory as implicit knowledge in the absence of continued asynchronous peer feedback. Alternatively, since AR is cyclical in nature, and is an ongoing process (McNiff, 2013; Mertler, 2014) where researchers are always looking for the logical next step that is always obvious (Hinchey, 2008), the online feedback could continue into the following level to understand the level of awareness and the types of awareness that can be acquired during an extended period of exposure and interaction with the rubrics.

Furthermore, this study is not an exception to the limitation of generalizability of outcome to other contexts which is characteristic of all qualitative research (Iliev, 2010). In this action research, as an insider investigator, I tried to bring new realities into being (Nicholas & Hathcoat, 2014b) through iterative cycles of intervention which required moral commitment from the participants and me as the researcher (Alexakos, 2015). In this process, one of the limitations would have been my own subjectivity in analyzing the context and the evidence (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016). The interpretation of evidence was likely biased by my own assumptions, interests, perceptions, and needs (McNiff & Whitehead, 2011). Similarly, participant reactivity (Maxwell, 2017) which results from the classroom instructor taking on the role of the researcher

might have had influenced the outcome of this study. Since the participants knew their instructor was carrying out the research and that they were being observed, they could have tried hard to cooperate in their responses in the class and on the Discussion forum. To reduce subjectivity, analysis of data was calibrated by certified CLB assessors, and to reduce participant reactivity, participation was kept voluntary, and no grades were assigned to the research component.

Finally, this action research was an attempt to solve a specific problem in a real-world-like setting (Willis & Edwards, 2014) that involved PELP learners in a particular learning environment, so the findings may not be generalizable to other contexts.

Directions for Future Research

This action research marked the first qualitative attempt to raise awareness about CLB writing task assessment rubric within CoI framework in a naturalistic TBLT context for adult international and immigrant ESL learners, so it has opened several scenarios for future research.

One of the recommendations for future research is related to the scope of the current study. This action research resorted to convenience sampling where everyone enrolled in my class was encouraged to participate, and the data was analyzed collectively due to challenges related to grouping for the knowledgeable other and anonymity of participants. Future research could analyze the change in awareness in each learner by factoring their diverse learning background and learner characteristics such as individual differences, personal traits, cognitive abilities, self-regulation, self-efficacy, age, and first language that influence the stability of implicit knowledge measures (DeKeyser, 2012; Phakiti et al., 2013; Suzuki & DeKeyser, 2015; Svalberg, 2007). When considering the learner background, data could be analyzed separately for participants who are new to the program, and participants who have similar entry level explicit awareness about rubric.

When replicating the study, the two research questions in this study can be pursued, but the above variables can be added to assess learner background at the beginning of the research and the changes noticed at the end. The action research methodology, design and data collection methods selected for this study could generate valuable data for analysis within CoI framework based on the choice of variables in the study. Alternatively, studies with control groups and quantitative measures of automatized explicit knowledge and implicit knowledge would further validate the findings in this study.

Another area for further research is enhancing the use of media selected in this study. In this action research everyone was required to post text-based peer feedback. Instead, learning experience could be enhanced by incorporating multimedia that would provide opportunities for multiple means of engagement (Avgousti, 2018; Johnson & Lock, 2018). Participants could be provided a variety of options to choose from such as audio, video, and even paper and pen that would encourage them to participate freely than the media limiting their capacity. Such a study could incorporate the action research methodology, design, data collection methods and analysis selected for current study within CoI framework, but the focus could be on the effect of the use media chosen.

It would be also valuable to continue the current study through further iterative cycles of action research. This study was delimited to the seven-weeks-long course. The study can be prolonged with the same learners in the following level to understand how long the automatized explicit knowledge could be sustained or if it would be transferred to long term memory as implicit knowledge in the absence of continued asynchronous peer feedback. Alternatively, since AR is cyclical in nature, and is an ongoing process (McNiff, 2013; Mertler, 2014) where researchers are always looking for the logical next step that is always obvious (Hinchey, 2008),

the online feedback could continue into the following level to understand the level of awareness and the types of awareness that can be acquired during an extended period of exposure and interaction with the rubrics and peers.

Finally, future research could replicate the current study in various language learning contexts like TBLT to validate or challenge the findings in this novel approach to raising explicit and implicit awareness in SLA. When doing so, research components such as peer familiarity (van Heerden & Bharuthram, 2021) can be added, and closer attention can be paid to analyze the level of teaching presence and social presence required to optimize the level of cognitive presence in the CoI framework (Garrison et al., 2000; Garrison & Akyol, 2013; Castellanos-Reyes, 2020) used in this study. It would be useful to understand the level of dynamic relationship between the three elements (Garrison et al., 2010b; Tirado Morueta et al., 2016) in the context of SLA where all the three are considered essential components. While all the other research components can be the same adopted in this study to raise awareness, the CoI Survey Instrument (Arbaugh et al., 2008) can be adapted for the specific SLA context to measure the relationship between the three CoI elements.

Conclusion

The present qualitative action research explored strategies to raise adult learners' awareness about writing task assessment rubric criteria in a TBLT class in a natural setting through asynchronous peer feedback. The body of literature on the interface suggests that explicit knowledge has a facilitative role in the development of implicit knowledge; however, no qualitative research using CLB writing assessment rubric had been conducted with a holistic view to improve competency in writing. This study was an attempt to address this gap and thereby improve my learners' competency in writing. The findings in this study suggested that

there are four themes related to the effects of using asynchronous peer feedback using writing task assessment rubric: (a) learners had low level of awareness about the rubric criteria at the beginning of the course, (b) teaching presence focused on scaffolding, (c) learners re-conceptualized writing and the role of rubric, and (d) asynchronous peer feedback increased rubric awareness and competency in writing.

The first finding that most of the learners had very low level of awareness about the writing assessment rubric criteria is consistent with previous research investigating L2 acquisition, and it draws attention to the need for additional measures to be adopted when adult international and immigrant learners from traditionally didactic classroom environments are enrolled in learner centered and self-directed environment where they are required to think for themselves. The second finding suggested the instructor as the ‘knowledgeable other’ (Vygotsky, 1978) plays a vital role in raising learners’ awareness about the rubric components by building, adjusting, and moving the scaffolds around to suit the needs of whole-class and individual language learners (Gibbons 2015; van de Pol et al., 2010). The third finding showed that learners’ focus on accuracy shifted to fluency whereas their beliefs about writing as an individually created product shifted to a collaborative and improvable process. They also started to look at task assessment rubric as a tool to understand assessment criteria, to self-assess, and to self-regulate their learning (Brookhart, 2013; Cockett & Jackson, 2018; Su, 2020). The most significant outcome from this study was the automatization of explicit knowledge about the rubric criteria that contributed to remarkable improvement in the writing competency level in each of the criteria in the rubric. This finding provided further supporting evidence for the facilitative role of inter-mental element in learning in SCT suggested by Vygotsky (1978), and the current claims in SLA that explicit knowledge has facilitative role in acquiring implicit

knowledge (DeKeyser, 2017; Hulstijn, 2002; Paradis, 2009; N. Ellis, 2005; R. Ellis, 2008; Schmidt, 2010).

The challenges faced by international and immigrant language learners in a learner-centered environment as in the TBLT course in PELP may not be evident on the surface since learners may demonstrate low levels of learning at a slow pace. The general claim that the ownership for learning is primarily on individual adult learners cannot be necessarily wrong; however, the significant role of the instructor in setting up zones of proximal development cannot be ignored. The instructor's awareness at the level of understanding about the types of awareness and the levels of awareness language learners need to self-regulate their own learning is the key to successfully implementing a learner-centered curriculum. If learners had been used to traditional teacher-fronted learning environment, instructors in learner-centered classrooms should be able to tap into the explicit knowledge they bring to the community of learners. The findings from this study suggested that within a Community of Inquiry framework, explicit awareness about rubric criteria can be created, raised, automatized, and applied as writing competencies in real-life situations. The findings could help curriculum developers and language educators to raise awareness about rubric criteria for international and immigrant students, and thereby reduce the challenges learners face in adapting to learner-centered and rubric-guided environments. This growing segment of post-secondary student population will be able to advance at a faster pace linguistically and academically.

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Appendix A: Participant Recruitment Email

To: PELP (Course Name) Learners
From: Name of Course Instructor/ Investigator
Subject: Invitation to participate in a research study on raising awareness about assessment rubrics in XYZ course

Dear Students,

We would like to invite your participation in a research study that we believe will help you to understand the task assessment rubrics better in the PELP program at (name of institution). Also, we hope the data collected will help improve future teaching and learning of English language in the PELP course.

Who can participate?

Any student currently in XYZ course in PELP can participate in this study.

What will I have to do?

You will work in a group on your class website (Brightspace). You will post selected tasks completed in the class on the Discussion Forum. You will participate in receiving and providing feedback to your classmates. You will spend 5 to 10 minutes two days a week for five weeks. The information you provide will be used for research purpose only with your permission.

How long will it take?

You will spend 5 to 10 minutes two days a week for five weeks (weeks 3 to 7).

Is this study confidential?

Yes. No one except your classmates and the research team will see your responses to the online discussions. Your responses will be stored in the researchers' password-protected computers at workplace. The anonymized data (without participants' names) will be stored for five years on a computer, and then it will be permanently deleted. The anonymized online survey information will be used for journal publications and conference presentations. The data you create by participating in the study will be used only if you give permission.

There is no risk to you. You are being asked to make a voluntary decision regarding your participation in this study. This study is not part of your PELP XYZ course work, and participation or non-participation will in no way affect your grades for any PELP courses. Your instructor will not know if you are a participant or non-participant until the end of this course and until your final grade in this course has been released to you. You are free to withdraw your permission to use your data any time before midnight (Date) i.e., two days after the course ends. The data collected after this date will be used to analyze and report findings, but no real names will be used. Only pronoun 'student' will be used.

If I want to participate, what is the next step?

My research supervisor (Name) will visit your class on (Date and time). She is going to explain the research project in detail. You will have the opportunity to ask and clarify any questions you may have. If you would like to volunteer for this study, just read, sign and return the consent form she is going to give you.

If I have further questions, what should I do?

If you have any further questions or want clarification regarding this research and/or your participation, please contact:

Name and Address of Principal Investigator

Phone Number

Email ID

This study has been approved by the University of Calgary Conjoint Faculties Research Ethics Board and ABC Research Ethics Board

Regards,

Name of investigator

Phone number / Email ID

Doctor of Education Candidate / Investigator

Werklund School of Education, University of Calgary

Appendix B: Consent Form

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Researcher's Name and Address:

Phone: Email:

Title of the Project: Raising Awareness about Task Assessment Rubrics in TBLT

This consent form is only part of the process of informed consent. It gives you the basic idea of what the research is about and what participants will have to do. If you would like more detail, please ask. Take the time to read and understand.

The University of Calgary Conjoint Faculties Research Ethics Board and ... Research Ethics Board have given permission to do this research. Participation is completely optional, and confidential. Your instructor will not know if you have or have not given permission to use the information you provide until you receive your final grade and you complete this course. Your name will not be used in the study.

What is the purpose of the study?

This study is trying to learn how to help language learners understand the assessment rubrics better in the PELP program at (name of the institution). If you participate in this study, it will mainly help you to understand the assessment rubrics better. The data collected will help in the future to improve teaching English language in the PELP course.

What would I have to do?

You will work in a group on your class website (Brightspace). You will post selected tasks completed in the class on the Discussion Forum. You will participate in receiving and providing feedback to your classmates. You will spend 5 to 10 minutes two days a week for five weeks (week 3 to 7). The information you provide in the tasks completed in the class and the online discussion will not be used for research purpose without your permission.

As usual, you will be completing learning tasks and participating in class discussions. It is normal for instructors in Task Based Language Teaching approach that we follow in this course to observe the tasks completed, listen to student interaction and take notes, so they can provide effective feedback. Your instructor will continue to do this. If you give permission, he may use his observation notes for research purpose, but no personal information such as your name will be used. The observation and note-taking will not be done at individual level.

Your participation or non-participation will not affect your assessment or grade in this course.

What type of personal information will be collected?

No personal information other than your name will be collected in this study, and this information will only be used to put you in groups on the Discussion Forum on Brightspace. Your name will not be used in reporting results from the research.

What are the risks?

There is no major risk anticipated in this study. You are being asked to make your own decision regarding your participation in this study. This study is not part of your PELP course work, and participation or non-participation will in no way affect your grades for any PELP courses. Your instructor will not know if you are a participant or non-participant until the end of this course and until your final grade in this course has been released to you, and one week after the grades appeal deadline. The data collected after this date will be used to analyze and report findings, but no real names will be used. Only pronoun 'student' will be used. Remember, if you are not used to interactive language classrooms, you might feel discomfort from participating in group work and being observed by your instructor. This is normal in TBLT classrooms.

What happens to the information I provide?

Your participation is completely optional and confidential. No one except your classmates and the research team will see your responses to the online discussions. Your responses will be stored in the researchers' password-protected computers at workplace. The documents also will be encrypted (password protected) for security reasons. The data after removing names of participants will be retained indefinitely for future research purposes. The information (without any names of participants) will be used for research report, journal publications and conference presentations. You are free to withdraw your permission to use your data any time before midnight (date) i.e., two days after the course ends. If you wish to withdraw from the study, or you have any further questions regarding this research and/or your participation, please contact:

Investigator's Name

Address

Phone Number and Email ID

Do you give permission for the researcher to use your data as part of the study?

	Yes	No
I give permission to use the data from the online discussion.		
I give permission to use the data from the in-class observation.		
I give permission to use data from the tasks I complete in the class.		

Participant's Name: **Signature:**

If you have any concerns about the way you have been treated as a participant, please contact the Research Ethics Analyst, Research Services, University of Calgary at Phone Number and Email....

You can also contact ABC Research Ethics Board at research. Phone and Email

A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference. The investigator's supervisor has kept a copy of the consent form.

Appendix C: Sample Email Tasks from the Thematic Unit**Sample Email Tasks (Adapted from the Units)****Task 1**

This is your first week at your new workplace. Your supervisor asked you to watch a training video (the one you watched at the beginning of the class today) to improve your telephone skills. Having watched the video, write an email to your supervisor summarizing what changes you are going to make when calling or answering customers.

Task 2

This is your first week at your new workplace. Your supervisor has provided you with an emergency evacuation flow chart. He / she has asked you to write a description of the flow chart to be emailed to another colleague who joined the company recently along with the flow chart. Write an email describing the emergency evacuation plan as shown on the flow chart.

Task 3

Write an email to your manager/supervisor asking for an appointment to discuss office politics. You have read about office politics in Canada, but you are not sure if your colleagues are crossing the line by talking behind the back.

Task 4

This is your first week at your new workplace. As a new employee you have had the opportunity to research company policy on dress code. Your boss has noticed that not all employees adhere to the new policy. She has asked you to write an email about company dress code policy to all staff. Summarize the information from your company website (reading above) and write an email.

Task 5

Your social committee has invited suggestions for its fundraising activities. As a new employee, email your suggestion to the secretary. Describe the activity.

Task 6

Write an email thanking your supervisor for helping you with organizing and getting settled. Mention how the training was helpful, and how you plan to stay organized.

Task 7

Task: send an email back to your friend (see speaking task for details) thanking for the phone call as well as the articles she/he sent you (the articles from the pre-task above). Explain how the phone call and the articles would help you.

Appendix D: Sample Writing Task Assessment Rubric

1 Limited Ability	2 Developing Ability	3 Meets Expectations	4 Exceeds Expectations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adequate control of paragraph structure with a main idea and some supporting details Adequate use of connective words and phrases <p style="text-align: right;"><input type="checkbox"/> 1</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adequate paragraph structure with adequately expressed main ideas and some supporting details Often appropriate use of connective words and phrases <p style="text-align: right;"><input type="checkbox"/> 2</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adequate paragraph structure with clearly expressed main ideas and some supporting details Appropriate use of connective words and phrases <p style="text-align: right;"><input type="checkbox"/> 3</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adequate paragraph structure with clearly expressed main ideas, some supporting details, and appropriate use of connective words and phrases Paragraphs are developed and joined adequately <p style="text-align: right;"><input type="checkbox"/> 4</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Difficulty with complex structures Good control of simple structures; adequate control of spelling and mechanics <p style="text-align: right;"><input type="checkbox"/> 1</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developing some control with some complex structures Good control of simple structures; adequate control of spelling and mechanics <p style="text-align: right;"><input type="checkbox"/> 2</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developing control of complex structures Good control of simple structures; adequate control of spelling and mechanics <p style="text-align: right;"><input type="checkbox"/> 3</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developing greater control of complex structures Very good control of simple structures; good control of spelling and mechanics <p style="text-align: right;"><input type="checkbox"/> 4</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adequate range of vocabulary Frequent awkward-sounding phrases and word combinations may often cause confusion Able to communicate a simple message <p style="text-align: right;"><input type="checkbox"/> 1</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adequate range of vocabulary; sometimes appropriate to the task Frequent awkward-sounding phrases and word combinations may sometimes cause confusion Able to communicate some moderately complex messages <p style="text-align: right;"><input type="checkbox"/> 2</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vocabulary is adequate to the task Phrases and word combinations are sometimes awkward Able to communicate an increasing range of moderately complex messages <p style="text-align: right;"><input type="checkbox"/> 3</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Good range of vocabulary adequate to the task Word choices and forms are usually appropriate, although expressions can be awkward Communicates an increasing range of moderately complex messages with ease <p style="text-align: right;"><input type="checkbox"/> 4</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overall, demonstrates limited sense of audience The writing is somewhat lacking in detail <p style="text-align: right;"><input type="checkbox"/> 1</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overall, demonstrates an acceptable sense of audience in language used The reader is sufficiently informed by the details provided <p style="text-align: right;"><input type="checkbox"/> 2</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overall, demonstrates a good sense of audience in language used The reader is sufficiently informed by the details provided <p style="text-align: right;"><input type="checkbox"/> 3</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overall, demonstrates a strong sense of audience in language and content The reader is well-informed by the details provided <p style="text-align: right;"><input type="checkbox"/> 4</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does not meet the requirements of the task <p style="text-align: right;"><input type="checkbox"/> 1</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meets some, but not all the requirements of the task <p style="text-align: right;"><input type="checkbox"/> 2</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adequately meets task requirements <p style="text-align: right;"><input type="checkbox"/> 3</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Addresses the purpose of the task and meets all task requirements <p style="text-align: right;"><input type="checkbox"/> 4</p>

Appendix E: In-Class Observation Log

Instructor's/Researcher's Daily In-Class Observation Log		
Date	Notes (space, actors, activities, objects, acts, events, time, goals and feelings)	Instructor's comments / reflection

Appendix F: Online Peer Feedback Observation Log

Instructor's/Researcher's Daily Online Peer Feedback Observation Log		
Date	Notes (space, actors, activities, objects, acts, events, time, goals and feelings	Instructor's comments / reflection

Appendix G: Journal Log (In-Class and Online)

Instructor's/Researcher's Daily Journal Log	
Materials used by learners	Instructor's comments / reflection

Appendix H: Analysis of Data in NVIVO12

Discussion Forum 1				Discussion Forum 9			
Name	Files	References		Name	Files	References	
No Response to Instructor	0	0		5 Not Related to Rubric	3	11	
No Response to Peer Fee	1	1		1 Cognitive Presence	3	103	
Organization	1	10		1 Triggering Event	3	41	
Instructor Praise -flow	1	3		2 Exploration	3	23	
Instructor Queston	1	1		3 Integration	3	35	
Qn about the feedba	1	1		4 Resolution	3	4	
Learner Praise	1	3		2 Social Presence	3	37	
Number of Paragraphs	1	2		1 Emotiona1 Expression	1	1	
Student Feedback	1	1		2 Open Communication	3	36	
Task Completion	1	4		3 Group Cohesion	0	0	
Instructor Praise	1	2		3 Teaching Presence	3	48	
Instructor Queston	1	1		1 Instructional Management	3	11	
Missing functions	1	4		2 Building Understanding	3	16	
Learner Feedback	1	1		3 Direct Instruction	3	21	
Learner Praise	1	3		4 Not Related to Assigned Criteria	3	10	
Missing Functions	1	2		1 Organization	1	1	
Technology Support	1	4		2 Grammar	3	6	
Vocabulary	1	5		3 Vocabulary	1	1	
Word Combinations	1	4		4 Audience and Content	0	0	
Word form	1	1		5 Task Completion	1	2	

Appendix I: Examples of Triggering Events in Cognitive Presence

Cognitive Presence - Triggering Events: Cycle 1, 2 & 3	
Criteria in Rubric	Examples of Evidence
Organization	<p><i>However you should divide your paragraph. It makes more easy to read your writing. (Learner 1, Cycle 1)</i></p> <p><i>About appropriate use of connective words and phrases, you could try include transitions in your writing.(Learner 2, Cycle 2)</i></p> <p><i>Furthermore, in the first paragraph, you introduced and mentioned the main ideas to compare and contrast, so to develop them in the second paragraph, I don't think you can start with the transition word "similarly". Similarly, in the last paragraph, because you don't develop the main idea from the first paragraph, you shouldn't start with "finally" (Learner 4, Cycle 3)</i></p>
Grammar	<p><i>However, I am little confused about grammar. You use so, but you did not use comma before the so. (Learner 5, Cycle 1)</i></p> <p><i>- Some of the complex structures were used appropriately (not only but also, because of, so) (Learner 6, Cycle 2)</i></p> <p><i>In the first paragraph, when you write: "I am writing this letter because I am interested", I think that maybe you can change "because" for "to express". It has no sense to use a conjunction like "because". In this particular case, the person who receives the letter knows that you are writing because you are interested. Good use of "so" to introduce the explanation of your experience.</i></p> <p><i>In the second paragraph, I did not find any other complex structure.</i></p> <p><i>In the last paragraph, you had used "which" in a good position. By the way, the use of simple sentences and your spelling are very good.</i></p> <p><i>Again, thank you to share your work with me. (Learner 7, Cycle 3)</i></p>
Vocabulary	<p><i>In second paragraph it is better to use 'the other one' instead of 'otherwise'. I think it has different meaning. (Learner 8, Cycle 1)</i></p> <p><i>furthermore, you wroteshould to.... (after should we cannot use "to") (Learner 9, Cycle 1)</i></p> <p><i>The next, in the end of the first page you wrote " the most important is... in this sentence we need a noun after adjective.it could be, "the most important things." (Learner 10, Cycle 3)</i></p>

<p>Audience + Content</p>	<p><i>You used appropriate language and created some good things like " I would like to arrange a dinner for you". (Learner 11, Cycle 1)</i></p> <p><i>2nd cycle 1: All good, just try to be more formal next time. On this task you sent a email to the supervisor and you used some abbreviation. For example, "6h" next time you can write "six hours". (Learner 12, Cycle 1)</i></p> <p><i>As we discussed in class, you have provided all the details, but your language is more like a conversation with a friend. In other words, it is too informal for a cover letter. Because in cover letter we have to explain about ourselves and persuade the audience by giving appropriate details which can be shown by our writing style. For example, while explaining your skills you should be more polite and you can write your skills in one or two complex sentences rather than explaining in simple sentences. One more thing, it is not appropriate to write "Sir" in starting. You can write person first or last name. Moreover, your name and address will come in starting, than date, than company name and address. In end, you can write "sincerely" instead of thank you and please work on your spellings. (Learner 13, Cycle 3)</i></p>
<p>Task Completion</p>	<p><i>Instructor: I'd like you to read the task instructions once again. Do you think you have met the task requirements? What do you think you were expected to do? (no response from learners) (Learner 14, Cycle 1) no sample</i></p> <p><i>I guess that yesterday you did not focused on the functions especially persuading. the persuade was general like giving just information to your boss is not enough persuading (Learner 15, Cycle 2)</i></p> <p><i>You mentioned some reasons in the second paragraph and explained why your friend should apply immediately. In the last paragraph, you sequenced by using some words like first, and, before that. Good job! (Learner 16, Cycle 3)</i></p>

Appendix J: Examples of Exploration in Cognitive Presence

Cognitive Presence - Exploration: Cycle 1, 2 & 3	
Criteria in Rubric	Examples of Evidence
Organization	<p><i>You organized your email orderly, and I believe every reader can identify the main idea for each paragraph. (Learner 17, Cycle 1)</i></p> <p><i>- You did use the conjunction to join the paragraphs (on the other hand). Good job! (Learner 18, Cycle 2)</i></p> <p><i>However, regarding I believe that the word 'otherwise' is not necessary there. As you are starting a new paragraph it is useless there. (Learner 19, Cycle 3)</i></p>
Grammar	<p><i>Yes. I should use complex sentences, so I will try it next writing. (Learner 20, Cycle 1)</i></p> <p><i>... thank you for your revision. I'm working in punctuation, but as you know that is very hard. (Learner 1, Cycle 2)</i></p> <p><i>...your suggestion is very helpful, yes, in second paragraph, when i wrote the sentences, i had no idea how to combine them to some complex sentences. (Learner 2, Cycle 3)</i></p>
Vocabulary	<p><i>In second paragraph it is better to use the other one instead of otherwise I think it has different meaning. (Learner 3, Cycle 1)</i></p> <p><i>You are right about the vocabulary, it's will be better if I add some new word. (Learner 4, Cycle 2)</i></p> <p><i>I like that you wrote some vocabulary to express your desire to get the job such as, I want to express my desire- I am interested even though you wrote that you interested about the position and in my opinion it is better to be interested in getting the position. It is also good that you mention some of your characteristic to persuade the hire manager such as, you are friendly but you cannot be activity you should write you are active. I like when you mention that you enjoy helping others it will give good impression that you are cooperative. whoever, I did not understand what did you mean by this sentence" I have had skills which are your responsibilities" did you mean that your skills will meet their expectations? I suggest to rewrite it in a proper way (Learner 5, Cycle 3)</i></p>

<p>Audience + Content 11</p>	<p><i>You're right, i think i should add something like, we are a team and i shouldn't send instructions in this way. (Learner 6, Cycle 1)</i></p> <p><i>Your email give a suggestion to your boss by use appropriate language. Also, you gave the reasons why you chose them. (Learner 7, cycle 2)</i></p> <p><i>Thanks for your feedback and i will definitely work on that. yes it was to informal next time i will use formal language. ya i can write like leadership skills, cash handling, etc. In sir i thought that there was no name that's why i wrote "sir" (Learner 8, cycle 3)</i></p>
<p>Task Completion</p>	<p><i>It is very polite request also you mentioned every functions of task3.01. I like to read your writing because you completed very well. (Learner 9, Cycle 1)</i></p> <p><i>I think I could follow the rubrics, i expressed the main idea clearly, used connective words, complex structures and tried to use vocabularies which are used in the class. Also reader is informed by the details provide and I addressed the purpose of the task, so I think i met CLB6 requirements. (Learner 10, Cycle 2)</i></p> <p><i>It's not totally CLB 6 in some points there are some mistakes like sentences structure, grammar& spelling mistakes. You wrote 3 paragraph which is good for CLB6, in third paragraph you should write thanks for suggestions me for taking ELF program and you wrote the sentences in a different way. you gave good reason for making evening classes (Learner 11, Cycle 3)</i></p>

Appendix K: Examples of Integration in Cognitive Presence

Cognitive Presence - Integration: Cycle 1, 2 & 3	
Criteria in Rubric	Examples of Evidence
Organization	<p><i>I think should have three paragraphs because it will be better to understand and clean. The first paragraph I will talk about apologize, the second I will talk about reason and finally, I will expressing appreciation (Learner 12, Cycle 1)</i></p> <p><i>However, I am little difficult to understand your paragraphs. I think your paragraph structure are not organized. If you focus paragraph structure next writing, I can look at your writing well than today (Learner 13, Cycle 2)</i></p> <p><i>Furthermore, in the first paragraph, you introduced and mentioned the main ideas to compare and contrast, so to develop them in the second paragraph, I don't think you can start with the transition word "similarly". Similarly, in the last paragraph, because you don't develop the main idea from the first paragraph, you shouldn't start with "finally". (Learner 14, Cycle 3)</i></p>
Grammar	<p><i>However, if you had used a variety of comparison words (while, whereas, unlike, e.t.c), I think your writing would have been more interesting. (Learner 15, Cycle 1)</i></p> <p><i>On the other hand, I have encountered 5 complex sentences in your work. Maybe, you can use another connector besides "so". Instead of this, I think that your work is really good. (Learner 16, Cycle 2)</i></p> <p><i>thank you for share your work with me. Your task for today was interesting, and you showed a good domain of sentences. Instead, I think that you can change some words to improve your cover letter. In the first paragraph, when you write: "I am writing this letter because I am interested", I think that maybe you can change "because" for "to express". It has no sense to use a conjunction like "because". In this particular case, the person who receives the letter knows that you are writing because you are interested. Good use of "so" to introduce the explanation of your experience. In the second paragraph, I did not find any other complex structure. (Learner 17, Cycle 3)</i></p>
Vocabulary	<p><i>Remember that (our instructor) gives us some vocabulary before the task, try to implement it next time. (Learner 18, Cycle 1)</i></p>

	<p><i>in your letter you use the vocabulary from the job posting such as interpersonal, communication, organizational skills, but you didn't mention some responsibilities of this job. You can use some words from the job posting. (Learner 19, Cycle 2)</i></p> <p><i>I think the vocabulary about the job responsibilities and qualifications is important in a cover letter. It is also a big challenge for me that the vocabulary in my writing is not adequate to the task. (Learner 20, Cycle 3)</i></p>
Audience + Content	<p><i>Thank you for your advice. Is this clear to understand. Actually, I need to add some more details (Learner 1, Cycle 1)</i></p> <p><i>(2)... I like the reason you mentioned in your email. IF I were your supervisor, I probably would accept your request right away. I think you did a good job of comparing and contrasting and provided the details about the two hotels, adequately meet the requirements about the task. (Learner 2, Cycle 2)</i></p> <p><i>You included 90% of the information which is very good, you missed write that you could work in a group. The format is very good, you included name, address, zip code, date, greeting and farewell. the paragraphs are also well structured. You have expressed yourself very well and the audience can be informed with your details. Good language such as: furthermore forward qualification further. (Learner 3, cycle 3)</i></p>
Task Completion	<p><i>It is very polite request also you mentioned every function in this task. I like to read your writing because you completed very well (Learner 4, Cycle 1)</i></p> <p><i>Regarding to the rubric, I believe that you met all task requirements like persuading and giving reasons, making request, and really expressing necessity. As your audience I can understand the purpose of your writing. (Learner 5, Cycle 2)</i></p> <p><i>I think your writing is adequately meet the requirements for this task. You gave the reasons to apply for this job (your customer manager suggested you, and you expressed your interested in this job); you mentioned this job was very perfect for you; you described your qualifications and working skills by use many adj (independent, organized,.. etc.). All of them to be used to persuade the recruiter. In the last paragraph, if you implemented to reference your resume enclosing, it would be better. (Learner 6, Cycle 3)</i></p>

Appendix L: Examples of Resolution in Cognitive Presence

Cycle 1	Cycle 2	Cycle 3
<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 5px;"> <p>Situation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Apologizing Giving reasons Expressing appreciation </div> <p><small>You sent an email that wasn't read by all the other team members. Since then, they seem to be avoiding you. How do you resolve this? Write an apology to the rest of the team.</small></p> <p>From: Anna Marie Sent: September 27, 2009 To: Sarah, Steven, Monique, Josh Subject: Hello</p> <p>Hi everyone,</p> <p>I hope everything is ok. Last week, I sent the email about getting responsibilities for each one, but I would like to apologize because it was not the best way to do your work. It sounds awkward. I am really sorry about that. I just wanted to just know, and I am very worried. Our team has been extremely cooperative, so I thought it would be a good idea. Planning some of the work loads, if possible, I am sorry to think that, I believe a meeting before is more dramatic and effective. We understood you very hard quarter.</p> <p>Richard, could you help me please? Your experience will be very useful. However, if you have any suggestions, please let me know.</p> <p>Thank you so much. Sincerely,</p>	<p>Oct 3, 2009 Jim Smith SAK Boutique #24 549 A SW Calgary, AB T4B 8C1</p> <p>Dear Mr. Smith,</p> <p>I am writing to express my interest in the Sales Associate position, and Jim from my customer manager suggest I talk to you. Please accept my interest for your review with over four years working in the field, my skills allow me to provide all the required responsibilities.</p> <p>Because I have considerable experience in this area and through knowledge of English, sales and marketing, I think this job is perfect for me. Furthermore, in addition to the requirements I have excellent soft skills. Also, I consider myself to be independent, organized, team-oriented, very communicative and hard-working. Therefore, I really wish the opportunity because it has my professional profile, because I value our working for personal satisfaction for the workplace, not only a good salary.</p> <p>My application from your website was about my professional experience. I hope to be selected for an interview to meet with you to discuss my qualifications and when that I think I would add for your company if you like me.</p> <p>Thank you for your consideration.</p> <p>Sincerely,</p>	<p>Function:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describing (a program) Comparing / contrasting <p><small>You work for an online gas company. Your manager wants you to take an English writing course at SAT to improve your written business communication. Describe the course in an email to your boss, so she can decide how to adjust your normal workload.</small></p> <p>To: Diana (diana@gmail.com) Sent: October 14, 2009 From: Anna (anna@sat.com) Subject: Regarding to writing course at SAT</p> <p>Dear Diana,</p> <p>As per your request, I have researched the English Language Foundations at SAT (ELF), and I believe that will be above our expectations because this course is extremely professional due to process in Business Communication. Therefore, I would like to share you the course's details if possible. Subject my suggestions.</p> <p>SAT offers two part-time options with different classes available in the morning, afternoon and in the evening. Similarly, morning or afternoon are 11 hours per week, plus 1-10 hours of homework. Itinerary in the evening that are 6 hours per week (Monday and Wednesday / Thursday and Thursday). In my opinion, it is a good option because perhaps it would be the best option. However, we know the course impacts my activities.</p> <p>In addition, I must complete a Canadian Language Benchmark Assessment for \$400 that will determine the ELF level I can select. The cost is \$650 per course, equally in my time. If possible, I can start on Oct 28.</p> <p>However, if I have the opportunity to take this course, we can make alternative arrangements about my workload. I really appreciated it after completing the course, I would achieve successfully improving my writing skills to add more value to the company. I am really grateful.</p> <p>If you have any questions, please let me know.</p>

Appendix M: Examples of Teaching Presence in CoI

Teaching Presence in CoI: Cycle 1, 2 & 3	
Indicators	Examples of Evidence
Instructional Management (Design and Organization)	<p>Post Task (#) here.</p> <p>Please use this forum to provide feedback to your classmates in your group below.</p> <p>You should give feedback to at least one group member. Please mention at least one thing you like and make at least one suggestion for improvement. You should respond to your group member's comments at least one time</p> <p>The purpose of this online discussion is to help you better understand the expectation for CLB 6. (Instructor, Cycle 1</p> <p>Hello everyone,</p> <p>It is good to see more focused discussion using the rubrics.</p> <p>The purpose of this online discussion is to help you better understand the expectation for CLB 6.</p> <p>Please use this forum to provide feedback to your classmates in your group below.</p> <p>Post Task 3:06 here.</p> <p>Then, you should give feedback to at least one group member. Please mention at least one thing you like and make at least one suggestion for improvement. You only have to make comments about the component of the rubric assigned to your group (paragraph structure, grammar, vocabulary, audience, task completion etc.)</p> <p>Finally, you should respond to your group member's comments at least one time.</p> <p>Important: This discussion should be completed before Tuesday's class, so your instructor can also join the discussion.</p> <p>Thanks (Instructor, Cycle 2)</p> <p>Same as Cycle 2 but added this: A couple of you still seem to provide very general feedback. If you are able to read your group mate's task and decide how it relates to the task rubrics (assigned to you), it shows how well you understand the rubric. I would encourage you this week to read the components of the rubric and then to read the task. Try to make comments related to the rubric.</p>

	(Instructor, Cycle 3)
Discourse -- Facilitation	<p>Did you mean "more expressions to compare"? It would be more helpful for L7 if you provide examples as well.</p> <p>What do you think about the feedback you have received from L13? You can reply to this thread.</p> <p>Thanks for counting the number of complex sentences in L16's writing. This is a great strategy to see if the writing meets CLB requirements.</p> <p>I'm sure L4 would love to read your feedback about how she has paid attention to her audience in this email.</p> <p>L20 has started a great discussion here. Let's try to take it to the next level. You could mention in a reply here how many paragraphs you would have and what the main ideas are.</p> <p>I'm just curious!!! How do you know if your task meets CLB 6 requirements? What are the FIVE aspects of your writing? Cycle 2</p> <p>Can you go back to the handout you received and list a couple of words that are very important to this task? You can respond here by clicking on "reply."</p> <p>It's great that both of you noticed the importance of using more adjectives and adverbs after reading the sample during the analysis stage. Way to go, L19 and L7!</p> <p>I think I can write my professional experience. I am not sure about that, so I will ask (our instructor)</p> <p>I think L17 meant it would be better if you provided the website link instead of asking your friend to contact you. L17 has also suggested a sentence that you could use to provide the link. (For more information you can go to www.websiteurl...) What do you think, L7? (Instructor, Cycle 3)</p>
Direct Instruction	<p>Please check the difference between 'except' and 'accept.'</p> <p>However, I'm not sure if you have provided reasons for being so strong in your previous email.</p> <p>I remember you asked about the word 'considerate' in the first paragraph. I'm a bit curious why you didn't change the word to</p>

	<p>'realize.'</p> <p>You may want to review the website linked on Tuesday's agenda about "types of sentences." Complex sentences should have an independent clause and a dependent clause. After going through the website, review the sentences you wrote in this email. Then you can check with me or your tutor in the Learning Hub.</p> <p>It's a good idea to apologize once again at the end. That's why you are writing this email. (Instructor, Cycle 1)</p> <p>direct instruction section (A couple of you still seem to provide very general feedback. If you are able to read your group mate's task and decide how it relates to the task rubrics (assigned to you), it shows how well you understand the rubric. I would encourage you this week to read the components of the rubric and then to read the task. Try to make comments related to the rubric.</p> <p>It's good to see that you have considered the functions as the criteria for meeting the requirements. What is more interesting is that you read it as the audience. Great job! In the coming days, you may also want to consider the FIVE aspects on the Writing Rubric. (Cycle 2)</p> <p>Great discussion here L1 and L19! Both 'so' and 'as' can be used to show the result of an action. However, as L1 has pointed out, probably she was focusing on meeting CLB 6 requirements (i.e., including as many complex sentences as possible). The other difference is that 'as' is usually used at the beginning of the sentence (as L1 has done here). This will place more emphasis on the experience L1 has than what she can do at the new company. If you use 'so' you are trying to focus on what you can do at the new company. So, who's right? Anyways, I'm curious what else would (or would not) make your cover letter appropriate for your audience.</p> <p>Maybe you want to look at the following website to review the difference between 'while' and 'whereas.' (Website URL)</p> <p>Just to clarify, connective words are used to move from one paragraph to another or from one sentence (idea) to another. On the other hand, conjunctions are used to link more than one idea in the same sentence.</p>
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Appendix N: Examples of Social Presence in CoI

Social Presence in CoI: Cycle 1, 2 & 3	
Indicators	Examples of Evidence
Emotional Expression	<p>see you tomorrow :)</p> <p><i>thank you :)</i></p> <p><i>That's why I am learning 😊</i></p> <p><i>I'm not good at computer.</i></p> <p><i>I didn't have enough time to give a suggestion or recommendations,</i></p> <p><i>Thank you for comment on my writing. I was trying to follow the functions, but I didn't complete well enough because time is short for me to write. :) Cycle 2</i></p> <p><i>Thank you so much!! I really like this forum! :) (Cycle 3)</i></p>
Open Communication	<p><i>Thanks for your sharing.</i></p> <p><i>I really appreciate your observation.</i></p> <p><i>I completely like your email because you followed the functions thoroughly.</i></p> <p><i>I really appreciate for giving us ample of knowledge. Thank you for the feedback. I will improve my writing in coming days.</i></p> <p><i>(L11 to instructor): You created a good learning chance for us to discuss so that we can recognize and correct our mistakes. Honestly, I like to learn from classmates because we can improve our writing skills by giving feedback. Furthermore, I know how to use appropriate or imperative language, and I identified which parts are important in this email. Thank you so much.</i></p> <p><i>I read your task and also I read often your Email in task. You usually write the first sentence was " I'm writing about~". how about little change it? For example, "as per your request", "I carefully considered your email", or "In response to your email". If you don't mind, just try it.</i></p> <p><i>I like the reason you mentioned in your email. IF I were your supervisor, I probably would accept your request right away. Moreover, you uses structure not only...but also..., It's very good</i></p>

	<p><i>attempt</i></p> <p><i>Please write to me when you find any mistakes, because I need to learn</i></p> <p><i>was really reading well your writing because I did not have an idea about my writing. However, I knew how I should write a cover letter from you. Thus, your paragraph structures which divided three parts are very nice. (Cycle 3)</i></p> <p><i>It is impressive how your ability to write has improved in comparison to Task# as a classmate I congratulate you and I am proud of you.</i></p> <p><i>Thank you for posting this task. Your writing is very good for me to learn some new things. If you have some suggestion for me, please don't hesitate to let me know.</i></p>
Group Cohesion	<p><i>Hi everyone,</i></p> <p><i>Nice to meet you all, see you in class!</i></p> <p><i>So glad to be your classmate, have a nice day!</i></p> <p><i>I am so glad to know all of you.</i></p> <p><i>That's very nice to meet you, see you in class!</i></p> <p><i>I think we can make it.</i></p>

Appendix O: Analysis of Scaffolding in Report Planning Stage in TBLT

Description of Criteria	Example
Organization (1) Adequate paragraph structure with clearly expressed main ideas and some supporting details Appropriate use of connective words and phrases	How did you organize your letter?
Grammar (0) Developing control of complex structures Good control of simple structures; adequate control of spelling and mechanics	None
Vocabulary (2) Vocabulary is adequate to the task Phrases and word combinations are sometimes awkward Able to communicate an increasing range of moderately complex messages	What words or phrases did you use to express interests? Did you use a lot of the same vocabulary?
Audience and Content (13) Overall, demonstrates a good sense of audience in language used The reader is sufficiently informed by the details provided	What language did you use to apologize? Is your apology appropriate and if so, how? What reasons did you give? Which information did you include, and which did you leave out?
Task Completion (1) Adequately meets task requirements	Did you compare/contrast the two healthcare practitioners?
Not specific to any rubric (8) This question could be related to any or no specific rubric criteria.	What were your challenges when writing this email? What did you integrate from previous lessons?
Reading (6) Related to reading strategies used during pre-task	Was it difficult to understand the information sheet? Why or why not? How did you find the necessary information?
Vague - need clarity in wording (4) The question is difficult for students to understand because of the wording.	How did you decide what to write down? How did you ask for permission in your email?
Total	35

Appendix P: Examples of Direct Instruction in Discussion Forum

Cycle 1: Forum 3

Use this forum to provide feedback to your classmates in your group below. Post your task here.

Then, you should give feedback to at least one group member. Please mention at least one thing you like and make at least one suggestion for improvement.

Finally, you should respond to your group member's comments at least one time

Cycle 2: Forum 6

Last week I noticed many of you were able to give specific feedback based on the rubric. Well done!

A couple of you still seem to provide very general feedback. If you are able to read your group mate's task and decide how it relates to the task rubrics (assigned to you), it shows how well you understand the rubric. I would encourage you this week to read the components of the rubric and then to read the task. Try to make comments related to the rubric.

The purpose of this online discussion is to help you better understand the expectation for CLB 6. Please use this forum to provide feedback to your classmates in your group below.

Post your here. Then, you should give feedback to at least one group member.

Please mention at least one thing you like and make at least one suggestion for improvement. You only have to make comments about the component of the rubric assigned to your group (paragraph structure, grammar, vocabulary, audience, task completion etc.)

Finally, you should respond to your group member's comments at least one time.

Important: This discussion should be completed before Friday's class, so your instructor can also join the discussion.

I understand that many of you were busy with the assignments, so couldn't be active on the discussion forum last week. I'm looking forward to a great week of enthusiastic participation on the Discussion forum. Thanks

Cycle 3: Forum 9

The purpose of this online discussion is to help you better understand the expectation for CLB 6 (COMN 153 Course).

Please use this forum to provide feedback to your classmates in your group below. Post your here.

Then, you should give feedback to at least one group member.

Please mention at least one thing you like and make at least one suggestion for improvement. You only have to make comments about the component of the rubric assigned to your group (paragraph structure, grammar, vocabulary, audience, task completion etc.)

Finally, you should respond to your group member's comments at least one time.

Important: This discussion should be completed by Saturday, so your instructor can also join the discussion.

Thanks

Appendix Q: Examples of Meeting Rubric Criteria in Tasks

Organization

Cycle 1	Cycle 2	Cycle 3
<p>To: Rachel Burrows, Mandep Singh Sat, July 15, 2015 From: Jina Shikow Subject:</p> <p>Hi! to my team, I feel everybody in team are not happy with me after I send an email about project. Now I realize that my email and the email I have been too strong so I am so sorry about that. I don't think I know it because is very terrible.</p> <p>I did that because I was impatient to do complete project. Not only that, deadline was coming and I just want everything were done before deadline. That, I think Rachel good about creating the budget and Mandep good about market research. So I just did that. One more time I apologize about that and I hope Rachel and Mandep be not avoid me. Thank you because read my email and I want invitation Mandep and Rachel go to coffee shop with me. Please, let me know your answer. See you</p>	<p>Hi, Associate ice Boutique or Training Manager, I found your posting and I am very interested in about this job. The job is Sales Associate - Part-time ^{position} that combine ^{combine} with me because am studying learning and Part-time job is for me.</p> <p>I have one year experience in sales. I was in the cloth store before. Not only that, I think I have am good about communication and I think this is good advantage for me.</p> <p>These These are some informations about me. If you want more informations, please let me to know. Could I have an interview with company? I waiting your answer. You can contact with by email or phone number. The email is Linkhu@gmail.com or 403 555 6595. Thank and I hope I can meet you.</p> <p>Sincerely,</p>	<p>Day: Oct 16, 2019 Subject: Describing the custom.</p> <p>Good morning Lee,</p> <p>I hope you have a good business trip. I read and I found some informations for you about tip in Canadian Rest ^{restaurants} at these web www.godmadr.com, www.wholebit.net and www.tipsyusa.ca.</p> <p>First, before you should tip for the waiter from 15% - 20% before the tax. If you tip for the waiter 10% that mind for 15% that mind normal and 20% that mind insufficient but the waiter you can tip 10%. Second tip, 10% to 20% or "keep the change" for the Bartender / Cocktail waitress. Next, you can give no tip to Sommelier because the tip appropriate amount on the check and the check including wine and tax. You can give the best check from \$1 to \$2 for the tip. Not only that, if you are ^{are} with ^{with} 8 people or more, you must tip 15% and the tip will including the bill. You have three way to tip, these are such as: you can put on the table or you can say "keep the change when you pay the bill and directly."</p> <p>These are informations I found and I hope it will help you when you eat dinner at restaurants. If you need informations:</p>

Grammar

Cycle 1	Cycle 2	Cycle 3
<p>To: Rachel Burrows, Mandep Singh Sent: Sep 10, 2019 From: Jina Shikow Subject: Project Team,</p> <p>I'm writing to apologize to you for delegating the workload to you without discussing each other. I just worried about the work if we can't ^{can't} get the job done. Please accept my apology. I was a little strong with my email to you ^{to you} in the last week ^{in the last week}.</p> <p>As we all know, our deadline is approaching quickly and we ^{we} still have a lot to accomplish. So last week ^{last week} I was ^{was} so worried about it last week. Now I can think about is just to do the project perfectly. Rachel, you are ^{you are} good ^{good} in my opinion, you're so good at creating the best ^{best} budget thoroughly, and ^{and} you have a lot of experience in this area. And, Mandep, you always do the market research ^{research} research portion well with your responsibility. Maybe ^{Maybe} Maybe we should have a meeting to divide up the workload face to face.</p> <p>I really appreciate you for doing a lot of ^{of} the ^{the} work ^{work}.</p>	<p>337, Citadel Dr. NW Calgary, AB T2G 4W9 retail position ABC Ltd.</p> <p>Dear Mr. Smith, I am writing this letter because I am interested in the retail position at your company. Since I have worked in this area for about 5 years, so I have the experience and skills to handle the work ^{work}.</p> <p>According to the job posting of your company, the position needs the ability to communicate with different clients. I have excellent skills at ^{at} it ^{it} about it. Furthermore, I can speak two languages so I can serve more clients at this post. Moreover, I can handle cash and credit transactions.</p> <p>I have attached my resume below which ^{which} including more details about my personal. I appreciate having the interview opportunity. Thank you very much and hope to receive your respond.</p>	<p>* Describing (a program) * Comparing / contrasting * ??</p> <p>Credentials 证明 Accreditation 认证 Foundation 基础 intensive 强化</p> <p>Pursue 追求 Eligible 合格 Licence 执照 Enhance (improve)</p> <p>Describe the course in an email to him, so he can decide how to adjust your normal workload.</p> <p>Dear Mr. Smith, I have asked about ^{about} the information of ^{of} English writing course as you mentioned that I need to take course to improve my writing skills. I will show you the details of the course that I got from the SAT website and EFL office.</p> <p>Regarding the EFL, there are 5 levels and each level has 2 courses, including ^{including} reading and writing. The other one is listening and speaking. Moreover, there are two options, full-time and part-time languages courses. As I need to work on ^{on} the part-time course is ^{is} suitable for me.</p> <p>First, I should make an appointment to take the exam in order to make sure which level I am. Then, I will be registered with my scores. Because I only need to take the listening and reading course, I prefer to take morning course so that I can go to work after I finish the class. It takes 2 hours in the morning so I think it's a good choice.</p> <p>The courses fee is 100 / per course and it needs 8 weeks. Moreover, the start date will be at Nov 21. If it is possible, please tell me so that I can arrange the schedule.</p>

Vocabulary

Cycle 1	Cycle 2	Cycle 3
<p>Good morning,</p> <p>I realize that my email may have been too strong and I'm so sorry about it.</p> <p>I was writing that project e-mail because our deadline is approaching quickly so I hope we still have quite a lot to accomplish. I apologize for my tone to let you felt uncomfortable, and in the next time I will more focus on my use-words. I really hope we can finish our task time and together to keep working together.</p> <p>If you think have any portions need to change, please let me know I will listen to you.</p>	<p>Lily, WJ Shoe Boutique's manager</p> <p>Shoe Boutique 678 1st St Calgary, AB T2A 9M8</p> <p>Re: job posting</p> <p>Dear Ms. WJ,</p> <p>I would like to tell you I want to be Sales Associate in your company.</p> <p>I think I fit this job because I am ^{extremely} extremely like to share my opinion and I ^{am} am ^{still} have a lot of things need to learn but I will keep my mind and do my best in this position.</p> <p>I hope I have the opportunity can enter your company and work together with you. I already attend my ^{class} class in this city if you have any ^{further} further question, please contact me.</p> <p>I'm waiting your answer and thank you for reading this letter</p> <p>Sincerely,</p>	<p>To: Lavan Date: 11/16/2019 Subject: Take an English writing course</p> <p>Hello Lavan,</p> <p>I hope everything is going well. Yesterday morning, you told me I have to enhance my writing so I went home to find some ^{information} information about taking writing course at SAIT. Before I attend class, I have ^{some} some ^{discuss} discuss with you.</p> <p>First, when should I start? Per year have six start dates and the closest ^{near} near ^{date} date is Oct 28, 2019. Second, which should I choose a morning class (09:00-10:00) or afternoon class (12:00-14:00)?</p> <p>Third, what level I have to arrive? Because here have 5-level program, if ^{the} the ^{completion} completion of EFL is ^{accepted} accepted in lieu of English 30. And how can I adjust my work? Is it be part-time job?</p> <p>In the end, I hope you can give me some time to meeting with you. Thank you for giving this intensive my writing ^{opportunity} opportunity however I am going to pursue my English to qualified in this company.</p>

Audience and Content

Cycle 1	Cycle 2	Cycle 3
<p>From: Ima Shiklov To: Rachel Burrow, Mandeep Singh Subj: apology</p> <p>Hi everyone,</p> <p>After a while I just realized that I had ^{was} been too ^{un} un ^{impolite} impolite, and ^{because} because you guys with some words which I should not do that. I'm truly sorry ^{ble} ble.</p> <p>I'm truly sorry because ^{when} when I have a ^{not} not ^{week} week with this project and didn't put on your situation, when I delegated ^{some} some ^{of} of ^{your} your ^{tasks} tasks a lot of work, ^{as} as ^{it} it ^{was} was ^{not} not ^{my} my ^{intention} intention.</p> <p>Once again I'm apologize for my behavior and I hope we still cool after all.</p>	<p>Shoe Boutique Dear Mr/Ms</p> <p>To who may concern, I have just read of that your company poster at SAIT hiring board and I'm really interesting about this job, because I'm a shoe lover and I always want to work at shoe department.</p> <p>As I said before I'm a shoe lover, so I did want to work at ^{some} some ^{of} of ^{shoe} shoe ^{store} store as a sales assistance position, such as at ^{my} my ^{address} address ^{store} store. I also have many of experience about selling shoe to the customer and how to react with different situation or introduce any kind of shoe, I think I'll be fit with your company. Therefore right now I'm still in SAIT college to study so I hope that I can take a part-time job in this time.</p> <p>I'll attach my resume in this email and I really appreciate that we can make a interview ^{on} on ^{Friday} Friday ^{after} after ^{noon} noon. I hope to ^{hear} hear ^{from} from ^{you} you ^{soon} soon.</p> <p>My contact: number: 567-664-8134 email: Nickypol1@gmail.com</p> <p>Sincerely, Sincerelell</p>	<p>To: Lavan Subject:</p> <p>Hello Lavan,</p> <p>I really appreciate that you give me a second chance to stay at our company. As you said before that I should take an English ^{writing} writing ^{course} course at SAIT, and I tried to do some ^{research} research ^{about} about ^{that} that ^{course} course and I found it.</p> <p>The writing course name is English Language Foundation (ELF) basically work base on my Canadian Language Benchmark (CLB), in total they have 5 levels each benchmark, because I just need to take writing class so I'll apply into a part-time course.</p> <p>There are two big ^{difficult} difficult ^{about} about ^{part-time} part-time ^{and} and ^{full-time} full-time ^{work} work. Part-time will take 11 hrs/week and full-time will 22 hrs/week. Both also have writing class but ^{when} when I finish class will have another class ^{about} about ^{speech} speech ^{class} class ⁱⁿ in ^{the} the ^{class} class I don't need it. The payment for both class are also different, because I'm a Canadian so I just need to less than others 50%.</p> <p>If ^{from} from ^I I ^{know} know ⁱⁿ in ^{October} October ^{we'll} we'll ^{be} be ^{very} very ^{busy} busy ^{at} at ⁱⁿ in ^{my} my ^{opinion} opinion I'll take a January course ^{if} if ^I I ^{can} can ^{find} find ^{it} it ⁱⁿ in ^{the} the ^{time} time ^{frame} frame.</p> <p>if I'm take a AM ^{class} class ^{and} and ^{also} also ^{my} my ^{own} own ^{class} class I think it won't be a ^{big} big ^{deal} deal and this course just take like 5 weeks, so I think it won't be a big deal.</p> <p>I'll attached more information on this email and I hope you can give me a ^{last} last ^{decision} decision.</p> <p>Regards</p>

Task Requirements

Cycle 1	Cycle 2	Cycle 3
<p>Function:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Apologizing - Giving reasons - Requesting appreciation <p>Form: Direct Style: September 30, 2009 To: Rachel, Business, Marketing, Support From: Xue, Support, Project</p> <p>Hi Rachel,</p> <p>I hope everything is on track with the work load. I just do small, behind-the-scenes work, but I would like to apologize because it's not the best way to change work. It sounds unfortunate. I am really sorry about that. I just wanted to just time, and I am very worried about my job. Our team has been extremely cooperative, so I thought it would be a good idea showing more of the work load, if possible. I am going to try to be a good team player, and I will do my best to make sure everything is done on time. I understand you may have questions. Rachel, could you help me please? Your experience will be very useful. However, if you have any suggestions, please let me know.</p> <p>Thank you so much. Sincerely,</p>	<p>Date: Oct 3, 2019 From: Jim Smith To: Steve Baskin Address: #24, 519A St. NW City: Calgary, AB T4B 3C1</p> <p>Dear Mr. Smith,</p> <p>I am writing to express my interest in the Sales Associate position, and Jim Smith, my customer manager, suggest I work for you. Please accept my interest for your review. With over four years working in the field, my skills allow me to provide all the required responsibilities.</p> <p>Because I have considerable experience in this area and through my knowledge of logistic, stock and inventory, I think that you will be perfect for me. Furthermore, in addition to the requirements, I have excellent soft skills. Also, I consider myself to be independent, organized, team-oriented, very communicative and hard-working. Therefore, I really wish the opportunity because it has my professional profile. Moreover, I also am seeking for personal satisfaction in the workplace, not only a good salary.</p> <p>My website contains more details about my professional experience. I hope to be selected for an interview to meet with you to discuss my qualifications and when that I think I would add for your company if you hire me.</p> <p>Thank you for your consideration.</p> <p>Sincerely, J.S.</p>	<p>Function:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Describing (a program) - Comparing / contrasting <p>Form: Direct Style: October 11, 2019 To: Diana (diana@great.com) From: Oria (oria@e.great.com) Subject: Regarding to starting course at SATT</p> <p>Dear Diana,</p> <p>As per your request, I have researched the English language foundations at SATT (ELF), and I believe that will be a great start on business communication. Because this course is extremely professional, it will focus on business communication. Therefore, I would like to share you the course's details if possible without my workload.</p> <p>SATT offers two part-time options with different classes available in the morning, afternoon and in the evening. Similarly, morning or afternoon classes are available, plus 4 to 10 hours of homework. Differently in the evening, that one is three per week (Wednesday and Wednesday of Thursday and Thursday). In my opinion, it is a good option because perhaps it would be the best option. However, let me know the course's details. My website contains more details about my professional experience. I hope to be selected for an interview to meet with you to discuss my qualifications and when that I think I would add for your company if you hire me.</p> <p>Thank you for your consideration.</p> <p>Sincerely, O.S.</p>