

Title: Making Rapid Gains in Second Language Writing: A Case Study
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This research describes a method applied in a third-year Russian language course designed to push students' writing proficiency to the Intermediate/Advanced threshold and beyond the findings associated therewith. The approach centered around argumentation and debate, a subject usually designed to improve students' command of logic and reasoning in their first language, but rarely found in second language curricula, much less with an emphasis on writing rather than speaking. Successful expression of ideas becomes the driving force behind curricular decisions in a course structured around argumentation rather than an emphasis on grammar and lexical items as an end in itself.

Data supporting the researchers' claims reflect ACTFL pre- and post-written proficiency test ratings, biweekly rough draft scores, and participant responses to a language background questionnaire. A total of forty-eight students participated, thirty-two of which were in an experimental group and sixteen in a control group. This research examined the added value of students meeting with a native-speaker writing consultant subsequent to writing a first draft of each paper assigned during the course of the semester. Pre- and post-WPT ratings (using both the current ACTFL scale and Rifkin's (2005) hypothesized scale) were analyzed using Independent and Paired Samples T-Tests. A comparison of biweekly ratings for first drafts between the experimental and control groups were analyzed using a hierarchical linear model. Background questionnaire data pertaining to motivation were analyzed using a univariate analysis of variance.

The researchers will present the methodological approach carried out in both the experimental and control groups that includes the implementation of a writing consultation center, peer review process, in-class pre-writing talk, invention talk, and reflective talk, and the use of memory box items.

Bibliography

Rifkin, Benjamin. (2005). A Ceiling Effect in Traditional Classroom Foreign Language Instruction: Data from Russian. *The Modern Language Journal*, 89, 3-18.