What can AutoLearn Offer to Writing, Considering the Methodological and Technological Strategies for the Learning Platform at Higher Education?

Writing, in the age of communication and information has proved to be a discipline and a way of thinking taught at many international universities in the contexts of composition, rhetoric, communication skills, and academic writing both in the undergraduate curriculum and in the graduate programs as a course for academic career. Writing has also been an integral component of preparatory school/foundations year curriculum at basic/intermediate/upper/advanced levels. Besides these curricula, it has been a strong focus in Writing or Learning Centers, Writing Labs or Studios, programs of which run through adjunct or regular workshops and one-to-one tutorials either through Writing in the Discipline [WID] or Writing across the Curriculum [WAC] projects or flexible institutionalized programs benefiting from the many facets of technology in teaching or evaluation frameworks with keen focus on pedagogical, linguistic, and usability issues.

Within this context, with the contemporary needs for improving new generations’ writing skills for them to be better communicators, stronger writers at an international standard, academics --scholars, instructors, tutors, specialists --are in tremendous effort to increase the awareness for the necessity of logically organized, sufficiently supported, well-knit, adequately documented and formatted writing at international norms, considering new strategies to renovate traditional methods, reform processes of practice, evaluation, assessment, feedback, and map the road ahead at their own institutions. Making use of technology is one of these methods through online formats and auto-learning, searching for new ICT-based paradigms easing the work of academics in foreign language teaching or skills development targeted at different audiences.

In this line, this presentation will focus on what a writing curriculum designer/instructor/tutor/specialist in an English medium university expects from an online program in classroom or extended settings for students’ empowerment in writing skills at undergraduate or graduate level. Hence, the presenter will emphasize the kind of activities a writing expert would look for in the enrichment of learner practice through AutoLearn, expected to provide ample teaching or assessment practice for:

I. Content: Relevance of introduction, thesis, claim/argument, support examples, and conclusion to the prompt, reflective of the topic/theme

II. Organization: Consideration for thesis and support with outlining prior to the composition of the first draft and logical arrangement of well-focused support with examples, and a non-repetitive conclusion.

III. Language & Structure: Variety of structures to avoid choppiness, tense unity, theme-specific vocabulary to be informative and persuasive, and good use of linking devices for coherence, unity, and fluency

IV. Documentation: Referencing sources, correct citing techniques in APA/MLA/Chicago/Harvard styles

V. Format: Cover & References pages, in-text citations, footnotes, appendices, pagination, spacing, alignment, choice of font style and shape

Interaction in the presentation aims to raise discussion concerning the users of AutoLearn and those who are willing to use it, creating ground for the possible solutions offered to the writing-related problems of second language learners and the concerns of a writing teacher. Therefore, auto-learning’s significant role in confidence building and self perfection of learners as well as changing learners’ concepts will be underlined such as: its help to well establish the requirements of academic writing in undergraduate students’ handling rhetoric corresponding to the aim in their papers either with descriptions, narrations, processes, classifications, extended definitions, comparisons, cause and effect relationships or purely argumentation and persuasion in a claim. Another point will be lessened attempts for plagiarism with the help of AutoLearn exercises that teach learners the difference between editing and proofreading through ICT-enhanced tutoring or automatic correction tasks. Care for accuracy, not only with correct grammar or word choice, but also in documentation techniques with practice for correct bridges of summaries, paraphrases, or quotes in the integration of borrowed material from primary or secondary sources, accuracy in giving credit to the author as it’s the case in Turnitin will be high focus areas.

All in all, presenter’s message will be on how AutoLearn can provide IT-enhanced resources or ICT-enhanced tutoring to foreign language learner university students from the perspective of developing their writing skills, establishing at the same time an AutoLearn community through dedicated trainers, institutions, and organizations.

* Participants will have access to the copies of PowerPoint materials and checklists at the end of the presentation.