

Explicit writing instruction in an OER textbook Julianne Doner and Connor Mark, UManitoba

This talk gives an overview of the development of an Open Educational Resource (OER) textbook and a research study on its efficacy. The textbook is designed for a 2nd year morphology and syntax class with intro linguistics as a prerequisite, with emphases on Canadian content, explicit writing instruction, and inclusive pedagogy. It is posted online for free, with multimedia content, following the model of *Essentials of Linguistics, 2nd ed.* (Anderson et al. 2022b). The research study focuses primarily on the efficacy of the writing instruction included in the text.

Why Open Pedagogy? Open Educational Resources (OERs) are available for free, increasing accessibility of course content. The 4 Rs of open pedagogy—the right to reuse, revise, remix, and redistribute (Wiley 2010)—allow resources to be adapted to local contexts. Adopting OER and Zero Textbook Cost (ZTC) models removes barriers to education by reducing costs for students. In addition, OER and ZTC improves course grades and reduces failures and withdrawals, with higher rates of improvement among marginalized student populations (Colvard et al. 2018).

Why morphosyntax? There are currently 3 open intro syntax texts available (Barrie 2024, Gluckman n.d., Santorini and Kroch 2007), but no open morphology texts. The existing syntax OERs are not well suited to a half-course combined with morphology, which is the curricular structure in at least two Canadian institutions (UManitoba, UVictoria). There is only one, outdated, textbook that combines both fields (Bickford 1998). An OER in morphology and syntax saves students from buying two textbooks for one course. Furthermore, preliminary results from research on syntax pedagogy indicate that current practices do not meet the needs of all students and that there are discriminatory classroom environments (Light et al. 2024).

Why explicit writing instruction? Writing instruction is included within the framework of Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC), in which writing is taught in disciplinary courses, which allows students to develop field-specific genre knowledge, among other benefits. Providing explicit writing instruction is important for demystifying the hidden curriculum, by establishing expectations and allowing students from different backgrounds to engage with course material on more equal footing. Explicit writing instruction and practice is also hypothesized to close a curricular gap, allowing students to begin developing argumentation skills earlier with simpler material and transition more fluidly into upper-year courses. Undergraduate WAC in linguistics is highly understudied, with only two extant publications (Petrucci 2002, Pappas et al. 2019).

Explicit instruction in the text. The textbook addresses such skills as: using course readings as models for genre writing, citation, the structure of morphosyntax papers, word choice, writer's block, theoretical and empirical arguments, and how to gloss and discuss linguistic data. Writing exercises include: exploration questions where students research language use in the world, reflection questions, re-write exercises to improve a writing sample, questions where students practice formatting or describing data, documented problem solutions where students write out the steps they took to solve a problem set (Angelo and Cross 1993), and argumentative writing.

Research study. To test the efficacy of the explicit writing instruction of the textbook, students in the winter 2024 section are participating in an ongoing research study. The survey includes a writing self-efficacy scale (Mitchell et al. 2021), a writing sample, a demographic survey, and questions regarding the efficacy of particular course components, including the text. Students completed a pre-test survey at the beginning of the semester to establish baseline numbers for the self-efficacy scale and the writing sample and will repeat the survey at the end of term. Self-efficacy is a measure of someone's perceptions of their own abilities, which is predictive of behaviour and outcomes (Bandura 1986 and following, Graham and Weiner 1996, Pajares 2003). Preliminary results should be available by the time of the CLA.

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