

Teaching and Learning Reflective Writing Skills for Nursing Students Whose First Language is not English

Simon Boynton, Lecturer, and Laura Wakeland, Lecturer,
Centre for Applied English Studies (CAES)
The University of Hong Kong

1. Context:

- Reflective writing important skill for health care professionals.
- Rarely comes naturally, especially challenging for non-native speakers.
- At HKU, nursing students given specialized instruction from CAES.

2. Intervention:

500 word
diagnostic
writing task

3 hours
online tasks

1000 word
assessment
on an
authentic
incident



12 Weeks

9 hours in-
class input

Feedback on
draft- peers/
teacher

3. Observation:

Improvement in students' quality of writing over 5 years due to:

1. Formal instruction on the theory of reflection.
2. Formal instruction on genre specific conventions.
3. Exposure to authentic exemplars of reflective writing in healthcare.
4. Feedback from peers and CAES teacher.

4. Conclusions:

Advice to non-language specialists:

- ✓ Refer students to models of reflection e.g. Gibbs (1988), Moon (2004).
- ✓ Engage in dialogue with students and tutors to establish the standards.
- ✓ Employ clear assessment rubrics to clarify expectations.
- ✓ Show exemplars (of varying quality) of past students' reflective writing in your course.
- ✓ Encourage peer feedback on drafts.

Reference List:

Gibbs G (1988) *Learning by Doing: A guide to teaching and learning methods*. Further Education Unit. Oxford Polytechnic: Oxford.
Moon, J. (2004). *A handbook of reflective and experiential learning : Theory and practice*. London ; New York: Routledge Falmer.

Simon Boynton
sboynton@hku.hk

Laura Wakeland
wakeland@hku.hk