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Exploring the connections between information literacy and writing for international students

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Abstract

Purpose: This exploratory study sought to investigate how the information literacy process and the writing process may simultaneously be experienced by international students working at both the graduate and undergraduate level. Any connections or intersections that were observed between the two processes were described with an eye towards informing the practice of academic librarians who work with non-native speakers of English. The investigation was framed by a language learning perspective.

Methodology: This study used a mixed-method approach. Investigation of the international graduate students who were non-native speakers of English took place through the use of an online survey that consisted of open-ended questions. Investigation of the international undergraduate students who had more limited proficiency in English took place through quantitative means, whereby samples of their produced output on a writing assignment were collected by the researcher and assigned numeric scores indicating both their writing abilities and their information literacy abilities.

Findings: Evidence of information literacy and the writing process taking place simultaneously was found for both graduate and undergraduate students who were non-native speakers of English. The graduate student group showed a strong connection between the two processes as they described intersections at critical junctures during the writing of their research essays. They engaged in library practices that can also be viewed as language learning experiences. Undergraduate students who were non-native speakers of English also engaged in both processes simultaneously but no strong correlation was found between the two sets of scores.

Originality and Practical Implications: Library literature offers us some information on the information literacy needs of international students but it does not offer any in-depth study that examines how the processes of information literacy and writing may be connected for this particular group of users. In framing a closer look at how these processes appear through a language learning lens, academic librarians may learn how to work more effectively with these students.

Keywords

information literacy, writing, non-native speakers of English, international students, language learning

1. Introduction

International students are a subject of interest to the worldwide academic library community (SCONUL 2008). The general literature of academic librarianship has addressed issues dealing with information literacy support for international students (Baron & Strout-Dapaz 2001; Conteh-Morgan 2001; Hurley et al. 2006) and issues relating to the place of writing in information literacy efforts (Elmbourg 2003; Norgaard 2003; Smith 2001). This study seeks to explore the connection between information literacy and writing more deeply for those international students who are non-native speakers of English at both the graduate and undergraduate level.

Information literacy may be considered a process. As defined by the Association of College and Research Libraries (2000) information literacy is:

a set of abilities requiring individuals to recognize when information is needed and have the ability to locate, evaluate, and use effectively the needed information.

In an influential early article, Carol Kuhlthau built a model of information literacy that she called the "Information Search Process." She describes this process as:

the user's constructive activity of finding meaning from information in order to extend his or her state of knowledge on a particular problem or topic. It incorporates a series of encounters with information within a space of time rather than a single reference incident. (Kuhlthau 1991, p.361).

Craig Gibson picks up on this thread of information literacy as a process when he describes the current state of studies about the topic "centered on concepts and processes of accessing, evaluating, and using information" (Gibson 2007, p. 23).

Writing may also be considered a process. As such, it includes such stages as brainstorming, listing, freewriting, clustering, planning, outlining, editing, organizing, revising and proofreading. (Oshina & Hogue 1999). According to Ferris:

this model emphasizes the writer as the creator of original written discourse, focusing particular attention on his or her procedures for producing and revising text (Ferris 1998, p. 4).

While the issue of writing includes many perspectives such as the teaching of academic integrity issues and skills relating to the avoidance of plagiarism, this study relies on the general process outlined above as the most encompassing overview of the types of activities students engage in when writing. As such, the focus in this study is placed on what the student is learning (by looking at what tasks students are involved in generally when they engage in writing) rather than placed on what a teacher should be teaching (by looking at what individual perspectives such as plagiarism should be taught).

In terms of non-native speakers, engaging in both information literacy and writing processes in English may present additional challenges. According to Kamhi-Stein:

For second language learners, library-related terminology is a third language (Kamhi-Stein & Stein, 1998, p. 174).

She suggests two forms of assistance to help students in this situation: *i+1* and scaffolding. *i+1* is a language acquisition model which maintains that in order to continue second language learning, the learner needs to reach beyond what he or she currently knows by receiving additional input (Krashen 1981). Scaffolding refers to the temporary support second language learners need from peers, tutors, teachers, and others to continue their own language learning (Gibbons 2002). Both *i+1* and scaffolding are forms of assistance that non-native writers may make use of when engaging in the processes of information literacy and writing.

Both information literacy and writing involve a progression of learning. It is in their emphases that these two processes differ: one puts the emphasis on finding and using information effectively and efficiently, and the other puts the emphasis on constructing content in a written form. Both, however, emphasize the means to an end, not just the end itself. Both may also be seen as recursive in that students can revisit stages of learning at any point in time, and both require the use of critical thinking in addition to the use of mechanical skills.

2. Investigating the Connections between the Processes

For an examination of the connection between information literacy and writing for non-native speakers of English, I worked with two groups of students. The first group consisted of international graduate students enrolled in a master's degree program for TESL (Teaching English as a Subsequent Language). As graduate students, they were highly articulate about their thought processes as they worked through a research paper requirement necessary for graduation. My investigation of how they might connect the processes of information literacy and writing therefore arose from their own thoughts about this connection, collected through an online survey.

The second group of students consisted of international undergraduate students enrolled in an academic writing course as a prerequisite for university admission. Because their proficiency level in English was lower than that of the graduate students, I relied instead on collected samples of data rather than their own verbal descriptions of the processes. What made this investigation a natural fit for this particular group of undergraduate students was that their instructor had assigned them to write a process essay on how to use a library. I therefore collected their essays with an eye to viewing both their writing ability and their information literacy ability.

Because these two methods of data collection are not the same, an equal comparison between the two groups of students is not possible. In doing the study in this manner, my aim was not to compare graduate students to undergraduate students on equal measures. Instead, it was to afford me two different avenues from which to explore any potential connections between information literacy and writing. Different methods were employed to give me different glimpses of how the two processes might intersect.

2.1 International Graduate Students

For an examination of how the processes of information literacy and writing may intersect for international graduate students, I solicited the input of six non-native speakers of English who were graduate students in an M.A. TESL program. Their goal was to become English teachers at the completion of this degree. Four of these students were native speakers of Chinese, one was a native speaker of Korean, and one was a native speaker of Arabic. Through the use of a short online survey (the survey questions correspond to the information seeking sections listed below), I collected anonymous thoughts from these graduate students about the processes they were engaged in at the time they were writing their last major papers. They were therefore simultaneously sharing their reflections of what they were doing at the very time they were engaged in doing it.

These graduate students indicated that engaging in the process of information literacy was important to them as they went about constructing their major research essays. Each stage of information seeking is described briefly below.

2.1.1. Deciding what types of information they needed

The participants described their intended use as the basis for the first decision of what types of material to begin with. For example, one student noted that:

If I need theoretical background [information] that I should know to develop my argument for the paper, I usually use books and primary sources. When I want to read an outline of information, I research secondary sources or web sites.

Another participant said:

As for composing an academic essay, I believe most of the information/references should be hard sources (e.g. from published books and journal articles). The citation of the above sources adds weight to the voice of the writer.

The needs of the type of writing required guided the initial choices of students as to what types of materials to begin looking at for information about their topics.

2.1.2. Deciding where to begin searching for information

The participants indicated that they begin looking for their preferred material types of information through the library web site. One participant noted that:

Around 80%, I start my searching from visiting the school library website. The website provides a quick access to both e-journal articles and hard sources (e.g. books and journals). With a student account, I can benefit from downloading electronic sources free of charge from the library server system. Moreover, school library categories and interlibrary loan offer another channel to collect potential information.

The participants were engaged in critical thinking at the beginning of their search for information, and they put background knowledge of library resources and services to use when looking for content.

2.1.3. Deciding which search results were best

Critical thinking also played a role in deciding which search results to follow up. One participant, for example, stated that:

[I decide which results are best] according to the relevance of the content of the search results.

Relevance was defined in different ways by the different participants:

I will judge from the abstract to see whether these papers fit my ideas to compose my paper ... I check the method of data collection, the way of analysis, and the size of subjects involved. Then I look for weakness or the strength of an experiment whether or not the author reflects such point ... It is always a difficult task to make a decision at the very

beginning. Normally, I begin with reading the abstract or glancing at the article. If my intuition tells me, this article is worth careful reading, I will not hesitate to obtain a full picture from the article because I believe it will guide my writing. In terms of some articles that contain a bit of information that can be used to support my viewpoint, I will simply read those parts and highlight the details with a marker for later consulting.

At this intersection, it seems apparent that as information literacy concerns may generally direct students to find and evaluate information, writing needs are also exerting an influence in terms of gathering ideas that may support or extend their own viewpoints concerning content.

2.1.4. Deciding if and how to use the information (all of it or some of it) that was found

The writing process exerted the strongest pull at this stage: most students said that they were constructing an outline at this point, and then trying to fit the most useful or relevant sources into appropriate sections in their outline. One student explained it this way:

Generally, I would make an outline first. In this way, I can easily divide the sources into different sections. If this paper is highly related to my thesis, I probably will use all the information. However, I find that I can only adopt some paragraphs from the papers most of the time because they don't cover or offer complete thoughts for me to use them in my paper.

Another student described it this way:

I consider my outline of the essay. If the information that I chose is fitted on the particular section of my outline, I use the information. If I selected too much information, I try to condense to main points by keeping relevant authors and specifying on the reference list.

Some of the student comments at this juncture also open the door to a need for a further investigation of academic integrity and plagiarism. Although this paper focuses on the general process of writing and does not look at specific aspects such as plagiarism, it should be noted that plagiarism issues are a potential source of much confusion for many international students. Implications from these results shed a strong light on the need to research plagiarism issues in more depth with international students. Taken together, the comments in this section again seem to underscore an intersection of information literacy and writing.

2.1.5. Deciding whether or not to continue searching for information after writing has begun

All participants continued to search after they had begun writing. Verbal phrases that the students used included “keep on searching”, “don't give up searching”, and “go back searching.” As to why they continue to search after they begin writing, they offered the following reasons:

I can still find more good sources; I never know whether I miss the better sources or not; I want to make full use of information; further research will develop the content of my paper.

In terms of the last comment, the writing process again becomes apparent at this point in the learning continuum. Students are not searching for more information simply for the sheer joy of looking. The payback for them is improved content. Students note that during the writing of their

first drafts, it is important to have found enough information to fill in their outlines. So searching and writing take place together again as can be seen in the following comment:

...I divide the writing into certain stages. When I feel that the first stage of searching is almost done, I will temporarily stop this task and concentrate on drafting... Sometimes, I will notice a certain part of the paper lacks sufficient details to support. I will leave them there. After a rough building of the whole passage, I will go back to look for the missing [pieces].

2.1.6. Deciding whether or not to include more information after a paper was written

The participants did often include more information after the first draft of the paper was written. Searching efforts at this stage were driven by the need to revise, an important step in the writing process. Revisions come from the need to clarify content, strengthen an argument, and sometimes to start gathering information for a future paper on a related topic as the following comments illustrate:

After finishing my paper, while proofreading I sometimes notice I need something more clarified or more supportive. Then I research more to find out appropriate information to compensate the weak part of the paper.

...after finishing the paper, much of the effort will be put on revision. Revising involves much attention to the organization and structures of the essay. Sometimes, if I find the viewpoints that I referred to from some authors cannot support the previous and next paragraph well, I might continue my searching again.

When I finish my paper, I usually reread it several times to check if I clearly present my point of view. If I find my stance is weak, I may try to find more information to strengthen my paper. Nevertheless, if I don't have enough time to revise my paper, I will keep the information because I can use it next time when writing on a related topic.

The intersection of information literacy and writing processes again becomes evident even after the students have written the complete first draft of their papers.

2.1.7. Deciding if the information that was found influenced the content of the paper

The participants believed that the information they found did influence the content of their papers. One student said that:

... sometimes I find good information that would be worthwhile to elaborate my essay, then I decide to change the frame of my essay by inserting such information in my essay.

Another claimed that:

It makes me shape my paper according to the information I get from the source. For example, the information might be good as an introduction to my paper rather than the conclusion...

One participant was adamant that:

The answer is absolutely yes...the best source in my view is the one that provides a logical framework or can influence how I organize the paper. In most of the cases, this kind of information inspires me in the composing process. By checking the reference lists at the back of the articles, I am able to start my searching in an easier way.

What is interesting about this participant's response is that it acknowledges that having found some credible information to begin with is often a good way to find even more through the use of cited works. This is a higher level information literacy skill and it dovetails nicely with the participant's own description of what he or she calls their "composing process." Finally, a more hesitant answer also includes the perspective of writing when considering content issues in the organization of a paper:

I never think of this. But I think it may subtly influence the organization of my paper if the content is very persuasive. I may follow the way that the author presents to [clarify] my view.

Once again, both processes of information literacy and writing seem present in how they go about organizing the content of their papers.

2.1.8. Deciding if searching for information is a linear or a circular process

All participants identified the process as circular and all of them tied it to the need to constantly revise throughout the process of writing. One participant tied it to background reading that takes place before writing begins:

The more information I read, the similar sources I find. Sometimes, I don't read the information the first time. Nevertheless, when it shows several times, I may decide to find the information and read it.

Another participant tied it to rewriting:

It is hard to determine when is the end of this process. Since the more you revise and rewrite, the more information the author might need to consult.

And a third tied the searching process directly to the production of content:

I don't think there is perfect research at once. I usually go back to the first part or to the last part while I check the content and compensate more information or take out redundancy of words.

All of the participants connected the two processes.

Based on the observations above, it appears that both processes of information literacy and writing are present for non-native English speaking graduate students during the writing of a major paper and that these two processes intersect at critical junctures along the way. The intersection is both initial and recursive.

2.2 International Undergraduate Students

For an examination of how the processes of information literacy and writing may intersect for international undergraduate students, I solicited the input of nine non-native speakers of English who were taking an advanced level ESL (English as a second language) writing class as part of a pre-university academic program. The nine students came from the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Korea and China. This part of the study investigated the produced output of these students as a method for determining both writing and information literacy abilities.

I conducted this part of the study by first offering a library instruction session that introduced these undergraduate students to library resources and services as part of the regular curriculum in this course. This instruction session followed a small group session format whereby students were inductively introduced to library resources and services. Conducted within a 50-minute timeframe, the students logged in to the library home page as a starting point, and then were divided into small groups. Each group was assigned a series of guided questions to work on together and given about 20 minutes to find the answers. During this time, I walked around the classroom and helped the students where needed. After the group searching was over, I had each group come up to the front of the classroom and share their answers with the rest of the class. I conducted a whole class discussion during this time so that all of the students would have answers to all of the questions before they left the session. (See appendix A for the guided question sheet).

A follow-up research journal entry was then assigned by the instructor as homework that all students needed to complete for the class. This research journal homework assignment asked the students to describe how they found and made use of library information during the weeks following the instruction session. This assignment fitted into the curriculum because the students had just finished a unit on writing process essays and this assignment asked them to use library content as the basis for a process to describe.

As homework, the writing pieces were not graded by the instructor, but were simply marked as having been completed or not completed. Those students who volunteered for the study then allowed the instructor to give them to me stripped of their names and all identifying information. I coded each research journal entry with two scores, one score to reflect writing proficiency and one score to reflect information literacy. Rubrics were used to determine each score (see Appendix B). The holistic scores for each instrument were designed to give an overall proficiency score by looking at various subcategories of expression and then adding those individual scores together for the final score. For example, the writing rubric considered form (how well organized the writing is), grammar (the use of grammatical forms and syntactic structures), mechanics (spelling, punctuation, capitalization, etc.), style (the use of structures and lexical items in terms of tone), and content (the substance of the writing, the ideas that were expressed). The information literacy rubric similarly scored writing through a series of subcategories but instead of writing patterns, this rubric looked for sources consulted, the description of the searching process and evidence of learning.

Each of the subsections listed above offered a series of individual questions for the scorer to consider when scoring each section. For instance, the writing subsection on mechanics offers a choice from 0 to 5, with 0 being "no response," 1 being "shows no understanding of punctuation, capitalization and their relationship to sentence meaning in the target language," 2 being "shows little ability to punctuate meaningfully or to understand capitalization or to spell in the target language," 3 being "shows some successful attempts at integrating punctuation and/or capitalization meaningfully into composition," 4 being "shows good grasp of functions of punctuation and capitalization usage, as well as paragraph divisions and margins," and 5 being "writes with few or no errors in punctuation, capitalization, spelling and ability like that of a superior writer of the target language."

The information literacy rubric structure parallels the writing rubric in that it considers various subcategories of information literacy use and asks the scorer to grade each subsection individually and then total the scores. As an example of an information literacy subcategory, the section dealing with description of the searching process includes the following questions to be considered: “Was a search topic clearly articulated?” “Were keywords identified? Was a search statement constructed?” “What finding tools were used and how were they chosen?” “Did the student modify the search statement along the way, and how was it modified?” and “How did the student determine which were the best sources?” For each instance of evidence appearing in the research journal, the participant was awarded one point. Therefore, the information literacy rubric allowed the participants the opportunity to be awarded from 0 to 5 points for each category much as the writing rubric did.

The scores earned by the students on both measures were generally high. The writing scores may indicate that the international undergraduate students were good writers. As they were members of an advanced writing class, it is not surprising that they scored well on their general writing ability (see Figure One). The homework assignment used for this study may have emphasized writing skills already articulated by their instructor and then put into practice with new content (i.e. their use of the library). Their information literacy scores were also on the higher end of the scoring spectrum (see Figure Two). This may have occurred because this particular group of writers had a greater depth of knowledge about library resources and services to begin with than other library users may have.

Figure One: Writing Scores from International Undergraduate Students

Scores (maximum of 25)

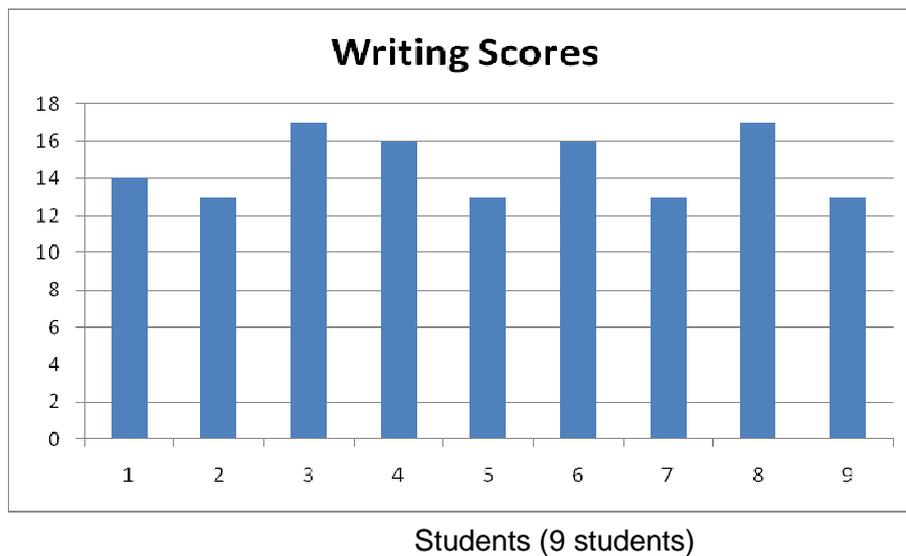
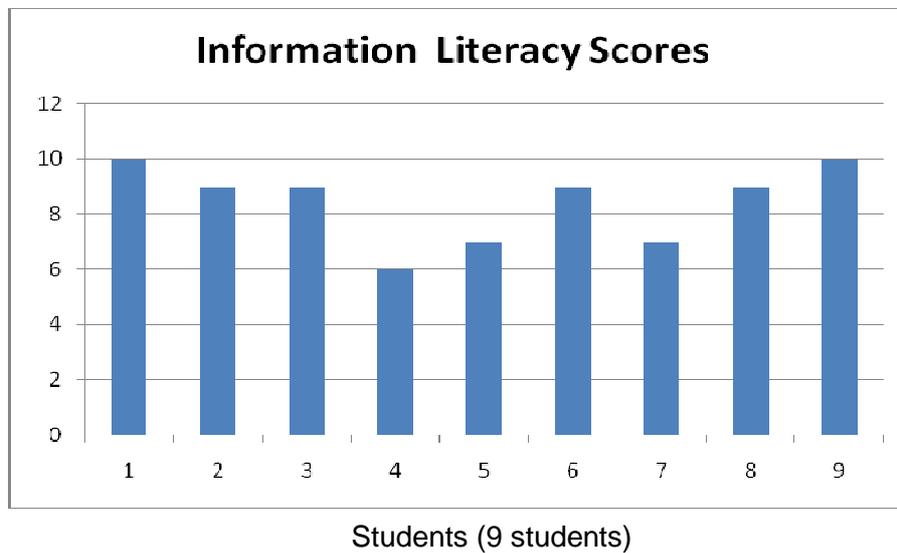


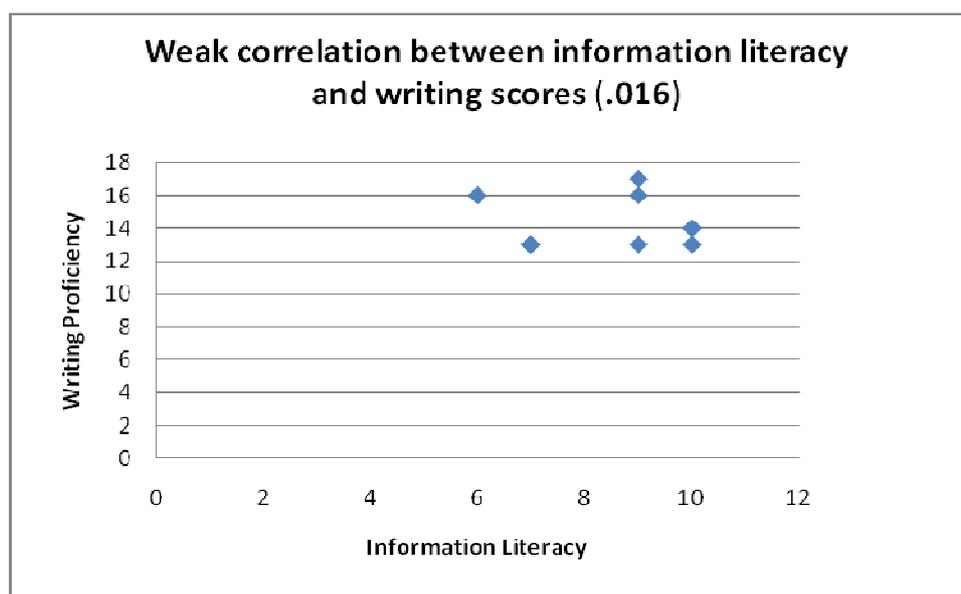
Figure Two: Information Literacy Scores from International Undergraduate Students

Scores (maximum of 15)



Although both sets of scores were high, one cannot be said to have caused the other. A correlation run between the two sets of scores confirms this lack of a statistically significant relationship between the two processes (see Figure Three). The correlation test run for this set of scores resulted in a correlation coefficient of .016. A correlation coefficient below .30 is generally considered small. What this signifies is that one score is not statistically associated with the other. In other words, predicting a student's writing ability from this set of data would not allow someone to then predict the student's information literacy ability. Information literacy and writing, therefore, did not meaningfully intersect for the international undergraduate students.

Figure Three: Correlation between Writing Scores and Information Literacy Scores



3. Building Connections between the Processes

This study illustrates the processes of information literacy (Gibson 2007) and writing (Oshina & Hogue 1999). The idea that library terminology is a third language surfaced in this study with examples such as the graduate student defining published works as “hard sources” (Kamhi-Stein & Stein 1998). In addition, this study reveals that international graduate students seek additional input through the “i + 1” model (Krashen 1981) by examining abstracts and investigating methods of data collection described in the articles they initially find. Furthermore, international graduate students engage in scaffolding when they move from primary sources to secondary sources and when they seek further clarification from previous sources when presented with conflicting evidence (Gibbons 2002). Although undergraduate international students did not show evidence of a statistically significant connection between information literacy and writing, they did show evidence of high scores on each separate measure. Further research may want to probe the connection between information literacy and writing for undergraduate international students through different measures to see if a connection exists at this level too.

One practical implication for academic librarians from this study may be that in-depth library instruction might carry a greater impact for students in more advanced writing classes than it might for those students still engaged in learning to express themselves at a more basic level. This does not mean, of course, that we should cease to offer library instruction to lower level students. However, it may mean that we could better gear our instruction towards their language proficiency level. In other words, avoiding the use of library jargon might be much more important in a lower level writing class than in an upper level one. Syntactically simpler guided questions might work more effectively at a lower level. Contextualizing the delivery and assessment of information literacy initiatives to the appropriate language learning environment could therefore be a crucial consideration for service delivery.

In terms of dealing with international graduate students, a practical implication may be that as we become more aware of the language learning issues that intersect with information literacy at this level, we may be able to guide these students more fruitfully in their research endeavours.

Exploring the connections between information literacy and writing for international students is a rich area of investigation. By investigating both processes and their relationship, we can potentially become more aware of student needs and become better prepared to help them as they navigate their way through both the information literacy and the writing process.

Language issues are at the core of the intersection of information literacy and writing for international students. This study shows that language learning models may usefully be applied to information literacy investigations. Further investigations into the extent to which language issues may influence international students’ use of our libraries would be of enormous benefit to the field of academic librarianship.

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Appendix 1: Guided Question Sheet for Library Instruction Session

Finding Books and Journal Articles in the Library

Directions: Students will be divided into four groups. Each group will be presented with a list of questions. Each group should work together to try to find answers to the questions. After 10 or 15 minutes, each group will present their answers to the rest of the class. The librarian will fill in any information you may have missed and will offer additional pointers if needed.

Group One: Finding the Catalogue

1. From the main university web site (www.brocku.ca), how can you find the link to the Library Catalogue? As a new student, why should you fill out My Library Account before using library resources?
2. Besides books, what types of other materials does the catalogue lead you to? (Hint: Look at the Advanced Search screen).
3. In the Advanced Search option, how many different ways can you look for items? (Hint: Look at the tabs across the top). How many different ways can you limit your searches? Why might you want to limit them?
4. Can you search other Ontario library catalogues from our catalogue?

Group Two: Using the Catalogue

1. Do a search on the word *television* first as a keyword and then as a subject. Why are the results different?
2. Choose an example from above. Show us what related subject headings are in this book record. Why might this be useful information to know?
3. What is the appropriate way to enter an author's name in the catalogue? Show us how to find a book written by *Colin McGinn*.
4. Find this book: *Why National Standards and Tests? Politics and the Quest for Better Schools*. Is it available in print?

Group Three: Finding the Databases

1. What is a database? (Hint: From the main library home page, follow this set of links: Research Tools – Quick Reference – Dictionaries and Thesauri – Glossary of Library Terminology)
2. From the Library's home page, how do you get to the databases? Are the databases arranged by title or by subject?
3. Locate the database called Academic One File @ Knowledge Ontario. What subject areas does it cover?
4. Open up Academic One File @ Knowledge Ontario. How do the basic search, advanced search, and subject guide search options differ from each other?

Group Four: Using the Databases

1. Choose the advanced search option in Academic One File @ Knowledge Ontario. Do a search on *Hollywood AND movies*, then do a search on *Hollywood OR movies*. Why is there a difference in results?
2. What is the difference between the results found from the Academic Journals tab as opposed to the Magazines tab?
3. Look again at the results from the Academic Journals tab. In what order are the results ranked? How do you know which are the best articles to choose?
4. What does the *look for it* feature allow you to do? If you really need a particular article and it is not available in full text format anywhere, how might you get a copy of it?

Everyone: Library Databases compared to Google

1. Why should you use library databases if Google is available? What is the difference between them?

2. Go to google (www.google.ca) and do a search on *educational assessment*. Now do a search on "*educational assessment*". Why are the results different?
3. How does Google rank results? In other words, why do certain results appear before other results?
4. How do you know if the web sites you retrieve are credible? What criteria should you be using to judge results?

Appendix 2: Writing Rubric and Information Literacy Rubrics

INFORMATION LITERACY RUBRIC

Written work will be judged on a 15-point scale. A maximum of 5 points will be awarded for each of the three categories below. The total score will be determined by adding the three category scores together.

Sources Consulted (1-5 points)	Description of Searching Process (1-5 points)	Evidence of Learning (1-5 points)
Were sources popular or scholarly? Were a sufficient number of sources consulted?	Was a search topic clearly articulated?	Did the student articulate what was learned during the process?
Were sources current? Were both print and electronic sources consulted?	Were keywords identified? Was a search statement constructed?	Did the student describe changes in searching behavior when confronted with inadequate results?
Were sources appropriate for the assignment? Were sources credible and authoritative?	What finding tools were used and how were they chosen?	Did the student learn anything new about the library that was not known before?
What library services were used – asking for reference assistance, interlibrary loan, attendance at any library workshops?	Did the student modify the search statement along the way, and how it was modified?	Did the student express increasing confidence in their research abilities during the course of this process?
Were sources cited appropriately and consistently within the parameters of a particular style? (MLA, APA)	How did the student determine which were the best sources?	Did the student express how describing this process might help them in future coursework?

WRITING RUBRIC:
Mac-Macaulitis Assessment Test

Each of the five sections below has a maximum score of 5 points per section. The total score is determined by adding all of the section scores together.

FORM: the organization of the content

- _____ 0 No response. (No written work submitted for evaluation).
- _____ 1 Shows no ability to organize thoughts in writing.
- _____ 2 Shows poor ability to organize thoughts in writing.
- _____ 3 Shows marginal ability to organize thoughts in writing and makes no attempt to establish a central idea or theme.
- _____ 4 Shows a good ability to organize thoughts in writing, although able to express a main idea, presents little supporting evidence.
- _____ 5 Shows excellent ability to organize thoughts in writing comparable to a superior writer of the native language.

GRAMMAR: the employment of grammatical forms and syntactic patterns

- _____ 0 No response. (No written work submitted for evaluation).
- _____ 1 Shows no understanding of grammar and/or syntactic patterns.
- _____ 2 Is extremely limited in use of syntactic patterns which makes writing difficult to understand.
- _____ 3 Makes several errors in grammar and/or syntactic patterns although relatively few errors may occur because no complex structures are attempted.
- _____ 4 Writes with good understanding of basic structures, but may make several errors when attempting to use more complex structures.
- _____ 5 Writes with good to excellent understanding of grammar and syntax of the target language comparable to a superior writer of the target language.

MECHANICS: the use of the graphic conventions of the language, e.g., punctuation, capitalization, spelling and so forth

- _____ 0 No response. (No written work submitted for evaluation).
- _____ 1 Shows no understanding of punctuation, capitalization and their relationship to sentence meaning in the target language.
- _____ 2 Shows little ability to punctuate meaningfully or to understand capitalization or to spell in the target language.
- _____ 3 Shows some successful attempts at integrating punctuation and/or capitalization meaningfully into composition.
- _____ 4 Shows good grasp of functions of punctuation and capitalization usage, as well as paragraph divisions and margins.
- _____ 5 Writes with few or no errors in punctuation, capitalization, spelling and ability like that of a superior writer of the target language.

STYLE: the choice of structures and lexical items to give a particular tone or flavor to the writing

- _____ 0 No response. (No written work submitted for evaluation).
- _____ 1 Is too limited in structural patterns to be evaluated.
- _____ 2 Writes with restricted vocabulary and structural patterns.
- _____ 3 Shows some evidence of developing a writing style although choice of vocabulary and variety of structural patterns is somewhat limited.
- _____ 4 Shows definite emerging style with a variety of vocabulary and structural patterns selected.

_____ 5 Shows definite style and flair in choice of structures and lexicon, including use of transition statements and idiomatic expressions comparable to a superior writer of the target language.

CONTENT: the substance of the writing; the ideas expressed

_____ 0 No response. (No written work submitted for evaluation).

_____ 1 Cannot express self intelligently in writing.

_____ 2 Can express self in extremely limited fashion naming only one or two ideas, but no attempt at developing ideas.

_____ 3 Can express self in fairly logical, comprehensible manner, describing and developing several ideas.

_____ 4 Can express self with relative ease, developing and relating many ideas.

_____ 5 Shows excellent ability to express self comparable to a superior writer of the target language.