

“Biz-com” Writing: Challenges from Academic Literacies

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This article is a tutor's professional reflection and attempts to take an academic literacies approach to writing and the teaching of writing and apply them to the writing component of an English Communication Skills for Business course at a Hong Kong university. In particular, it argues for the need for what Lillis (2003) has to say about opening up space for dialogue and discussion vis-à-vis the sometimes categorically rigid messages fed back to students on their written work by writing tutors. This is done with a view to facilitating student empowerment as well as deeper thought in relation to the nature of writing in general and business writing in particular. In this connection, the article notes the inadequacy of viewing the teaching of writing as being restricted to teaching form, format, and/or atomized skills at sentence level. Finally, the article discusses pedagogical implications, how opening up space for dialogue into the way ideological forces come to bear on business writing practices—as is encouraged by academic literacies thinkers—empowers both business communication teachers and students and gives greater value addedness to business communication writing lessons.

Academic Literacies, Student Empowerment and Business Writing

Much has been discussed by academic literacy thinkers about what an academic literacies approach can do to serve as a way to empower students particularly in the area of writing. Having taken an interest in academic literacies as a classroom practitioner ever since teaching English for Academic Purposes for several years and impressed with how Lillis (2003) sought to work out ways to empower students in her university with the sort of dialogic engagements that helped the students