

Students' Argument Writing Failure in English: Blame it on Socio-culture System

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ABSTRACT The present paper is an outcome of a study in which the researchers evaluated and interpreted students' argument essays within the broader communicative context of the Limpopo Province of South Africa. To arrive at the sphere of influence on second language education, the researchers synthesized linguistics with socio cultural insights from scholars who view second language learners as social beings. Through a socio-cultural orientation to literacy, lecturers and students are receptors to both formal and informal influences. Hence students' discourses are not viewed solely as texts that share formal surface features, but as a manifestation of collective cognition mediated by the tools and resources that are made available and used in the social milieu. The researchers concluded that University of Venda students' limited capacity in adopting a credible and objective stance in argument writing is attributed to a collectivist background and a lack of discursive interaction that has resulted from an inadequate apprenticeship into academic discourse. As such, the English Department's efforts are being thwarted by an absence of appropriate discourse reinforcement from content disciplines and following on this, is the fact that some academics are ill equipped for the task of providing both linguistic and discipline specific knowledge scaffolding to students.