

Using a Corequisite Composition Workshop to Accelerate Students

Andrea A. Berta

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Andrea A. Berta has a B.A. from the University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP) and an MLIS from the University of Texas at Austin. In 1985, she began her career at UTEP as a tutor and became a teacher in 1986. Currently, she is Director of the Developmental English Program at UTEP. She has taught Developmental Reading and Writing, Integrated Reading and Writing, Seminar in Critical Inquiry, Freshman Composition, Study Skills, Business Communication, and Technical Writing. In her spare time, she likes to garden and read.

When the State of Texas passed House Bill 2223 (2017) requiring institutions of higher education to place 25% of their developmental students into a college-level corequisite course by Fall 2018, some Texas colleges and universities had corequisites already in use. The University of Texas at El Paso (UTEP) was one of those institutions. Since 2002, UTEP has had its highest-level developmental writing students in a corequisite course, English 0111 (N. Gallarzo, personal communication, July 17, 2017). Since that time, English 0111 has prepared students to successfully meet the requirements of college-level writing courses.

In “An examination of the impact of accelerating community college students’ progression through developmental education,” Hodara and Jaggars (2014) refer to several studies that show that the longer students are in remediation, the less likely they are to graduate with a college degree. Accordingly, Developmental English faculty members at UTEP in 2001 searched for ways to decrease their students’ time in remediation (K. Mangelsdorf, personal communication, January 18, 2018) and created the English 0111 Composition Workshop in 2002. English 0111 mainstreams students who score within a few points of passing the Texas Success Initiative Assessment (TSIA), the placement test mandated by the Texas Success Initiative (TSI), into the first-semester college-level writing course (FYC). The TSI is a program that determines college-readiness standards in reading, writing, and math. In

addition to increasing their likelihood of graduation, mainstreaming saves students time and money (Rutschow & Schneider, 2011). Students who are mainstreamed, who ordinarily would take a three-hour developmental writing course, no longer spend a full semester in Developmental English before beginning their FYC course. Furthermore, these students only pay for a one-hour Developmental English course rather than a three-hour course.

Iterations of English 0111

The English 0111 course taught in 2002 greatly differs from the course taught today. Revisions to the FYC course, legislative changes, and concerns over varying instructional practices (course drift) have all contributed to changes in the content and delivery of English 0111. Today, because of legislative changes (THECB, 2018), faculty and administrators in Texas are looking for ways to create or redesign corequisite courses. As a result, a look at the different iterations of English 0111 may prove fruitful for institutions of higher education in the process of developing or revising a corequisite writing course.

First Iteration

The initial structure of English 0111 was similar to the structure used in the adjunct workshop at California State University, Chico (K. Mangelsdorf, personal communication, January 18, 2018). Rodby and Fox (2000) describe the Chico workshop as a one-credit course that met for 50 minutes two times a week; even though the workshop did not count toward graduation credit, students could apply that one-hour credit to “financial aid or athletic eligibility” requirements (p. 88). According to Rodby and Fox (2000), the rationale behind the workshop was that students felt they were getting more value from the course if it carried college credit. The bi-weekly format provided time for students to seek help on issues related to FYC and for instructors to address those issues (Rodby & Fox, 2000). Registration into FYC used a mixed-ability approach, where students in each section of the workshop came from different sections of FYC. This enrollment strategy allowed them to take FYC with students who did not need remediation—ensuring that these students were completely mainstreamed into FYC (Rodby and Fox, 2000).

English 0111 instructors in this first iteration of the workshop began each class session by asking students what they were working on in FYC and what questions they had. Instructors then addressed these needs and spent time working with students on a one-on-one basis, giving feedback on drafts, or by giving students time to respond to their peers’ papers. When time allowed, instructors would cover issues frequently encountered by FYC students, such as grammar and mechanics issues. Because English 0111 met two days rather than the traditional three days, faculty members held office hours on the third day, encouraging students to bring drafts in for feedback.

Initially, the students who placed into English 0111 included those who had already passed the placement exam but only by a narrow margin. In 2006, however, faculty teaching English 0111 determined these students could perform well in the FYC

course without the additional support from the workshop. Thus, UTEP changed the placement standard: students who failed the placement test by a few points, or *bubble* students, became the sole targeted student population for English 0111. This change also ensured Developmental English's compliance with the Texas Success Initiative (TSI).

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Second Iteration

Although the course was designed to be somewhat flexible in terms of content, administrators became increasingly concerned over course drift. The National Center for Academic Transformation (2005) defined course drift as “what happens when individual instructors teach the course to suit their individual interests rather than to meet agreed-upon learning goals for students, resulting in inconsistent learning experiences for students and inconsistent learning outcomes” (p. 1). With several sections of the course offered each year and several instructors teaching those sections, course drift was evident in English 0111.

Searching for ways to reduce course drift, in 2007, Developmental English applied for and received a Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) redesign grant to transition English 0111 into a hybrid course, which resulted in the second iteration of English 0111. The decision to redesign English 0111 from a completely face-to-face course to a hybrid course was not without controversy. Some Developmental English faculty members believed turning the course into a hybrid course with standardized course content and assessments would reduce or eliminate course drift in English 0111. Others felt the hybrid course would be less useful to the students than the looser structure of the workshop, where instructors focused each class session around concerns identified by the students. The faculty voices in support of the hybrid course won the debate, and English 0111 became a hybrid course.

This second iteration of English 0111 centered around 15 content modules (see Table 1). The content modules contained informational handouts, exercises, and quizzes designed to support student learning in the FYC course. A learning management system (LMS) delivered modules online. Savery and Hallam (2002) argue that the use of web-based “shared course materials . . . Improve consistency and quality of instruction throughout all sections of the course . . . Reduce the preparation time for faculty . . . [and] Provide class materials . . .

in one easy to find location. . .” (p. 1747). Developmental English witnessed these benefits as well as other benefits in the revised course. The transformation of English 0111 into an online hybrid course also freed up classrooms, reduced the administrative budget, and improved students' attitudes toward the class since they now had unlimited access to course materials and instant feedback on their quizzes.

Faculty teaching English 0111 continued to start the class session addressing questions or concerns students had about their FYC course. Instructors spent the remainder of the class session, however, discussing ideas found in the content modules scheduled for that week rather than working with the students on a one-to-one basis or workshoping papers.

Table 1
Content Modules for Second Iteration of English 0111

Module Number	Title
One	Course Introduction
Two	The Writing Process and Expressive Writing
Three	Paragraph and Essay Structure
Four	Structural Development for Academic Essays
Five	Concepts in Essay Writing
Six	College Writing Style Expectations
Seven	Using Literary Techniques
Eight	Critical Reading Strategies
Nine	Writing Effectively
Ten	Argumentative Essays
Eleven	Conducting Research
Twelve	Fine-Tuning Final Products
Thirteen	Unclear Written Communication
Fourteen	Modes
Fifteen	Resources for Second-Language Learners

Third Iteration

As faculty teaching the FYC class became familiar with these new modules, they expressed the desire to have the information available to all their students, not just the ones in English 0111. As a result, Developmental English applied for and received a second grant from the THECB to revise the existing modules, add new modules, and make these materials available to all FYC students. A second redesign team composed of five full-time Developmental English instructors and five FYC instructors developed the following learning outcomes:

- Students will develop an understanding of syllabi and assignment instructions.
- Students will demonstrate a proficiency in the writing process.
- Students will demonstrate a proficiency in the organizational structure of an essay.
- Students will learn to proofread and edit.
- Students will use critical thinking, reading, and writing skills.
- Students will incorporate sources by addressing correct in-text citation methods and writing practice or actual reference pages.

Faculty members then worked in five teams, composed of one Developmental English and one FYC instructor, to develop skills-based modules that would support these outcomes.

This second grant resulted in the third and latest iteration of English 0111 with a total of 45 modules, which can be used by English 0111 and FYC instructors as warranted. Each module includes lesson plans, informational handouts, and quizzes, and many modules contain discussion board exercises (see Appendix A for a sample of a typical module). To make the modules easy to find on the LMS, faculty categorized the modules (see Table 2).

Instructors new to English 0111 have access to a standardized calendar of module assignments, designed to complement the common calendar used for FYC assignments and provided in the LMS, but instructors can alter the calendar to meet the needs of the class (see Appendix B).

In addition to English 0111, the Developmental English program’s integrated reading and writing course and some FYC courses use the 45 modules. The modules have been so well received, in fact, that other English instructors and freshmen seminar (freshmen success) faculty members have asked to use the modules in their classes.

Table 2
Categories and Content Modules for Third Iteration of English 0111

Categories	Modules
Getting Started	Syllabus, Hybrid Course, Writing Process, Writing Well, and MLA Format
Fundamentals of Composition	Audience and Purpose, Generating Ideas, Paragraphs, Introductions, Thesis Sentences, Conclusions, Essay Structure, Organizing Your Essay, Unity, Coherence, and Voice
Getting It Right	Revision, Eliminating Wordiness, Creating Metaphors, Stylistic Literary Techniques, Academic Writing Style, and Editing and Proofreading
Modes and Rhetorical Strategies	Narration/Expression, Description: Showing Vs Telling, Interviewing, Classification, Comparison/Contrast, and Process
Argument	Argumentation, Argumentative Claims, Argumentative Evidence, Logical Fallacies, and Counter-Argument
Integrating and Citing Sources	Plagiarism, In-Text Citations, Integrating Sources, and Works Cited for MLA Format
Critical Reading Modules	Using the Dictionary, Analysis, Annotating, Outlining, Previewing, Questioning, Reflecting, Summarizing, and Metacognition

As in any arduous endeavor, challenges arose during this second redesign. One challenge was faculty buy-in. At the time of the second redesign, Developmental English and FYC were two separate departments housed in two different colleges. This split resulted in less immediate communication between the departments. Since English 0111 impacts students in both Developmental English and FYC courses, each department

felt strongly that its input was needed on this project. Including FYC faculty members in the revision process strengthened communication between the two departments and ensured that both departments had a say in the resulting changes. Further challenges resulted from the varying degrees of technical expertise found in participating instructors and from the fact that the new modules varied greatly in style. To overcome these last challenges, staff members from instructional technologies worked with instructors to ensure uniformity in the modules.

Updates to the Third Iteration

More recently, Developmental English instructors added modules on APA format, understanding rhetorical appeals, and annotated bibliographies to the course to reflect changes made in the FYC course. In addition, Developmental English retired other modules that no longer reflected material covered in FYC.

Another change resulted from changes to the placement exam. The State of Texas lowered the passing score on the writing portion of the Texas Success Initiative Assessment (TSIA) in Summer 2017 (P. Caro, Personal Communication, August 4, 2017). Accordingly, Developmental English lowered the TSIA score that would place students into English 0111. Students in English 0111 are still bubble students—students who almost passed the writing portion of the TSIA—but these students enter English 0111 with significantly lower scores on the essay portion of the TSIA than students previously taking the course. Therefore, this new student population requires additional support in specific areas of composition. As a result, Developmental English faculty members created new modules for English 0111 (see Figure 1).

Action Verbs	Descriptive Words	Independent Clauses
Simple Sentences	Subject-Verb Agreement	Compound Sentences
Sentence Fragments	Run-ons and Comma Splices	Using Commas Correctly
Active and Passive Voice	Countable and Non-Countable Nouns	

Figure 1. New English 0111 Modules

These new modules are like the existing modules—complete with informational handouts, exercises, and quizzes. They differ, however, from the older modules in one important way. Individual students will determine the order in which they finish modules based on what they feel meets their most pressing needs at the time.

Results

Although English 0111 has been offered since 2002, the data presented below in Table 3 are based on the last few years only. In Fall 2013, the TSIA supplanted four placement exams used in Texas prior to that time (THECB 2017). Since the TSIA is now the required placement exam, it makes sense to focus on the performance of students

who take English 0111 because of TSIA placement rather than consider how students performed in earlier years taking other placement exams. Therefore, the data below begin with the implementation of the TSIA.

The bulk of Developmental English students register in the Fall semester, so the program tracks students enrolled in its Fall courses (see Table 3). Developmental English administrators typically look at several factors when assessing English 0111 students' performance:

- How many students attempted and passed English 0111.
- How many attempted and passed FYC,
- What was the Fall semester GPA of English 0111 students.
- How many English 0111 students enrolled at UTEP the next semester.

As Table 3 illustrates, no students enrolled in English 0111 in Fall 2014 and Fall 2017. Fall 2014 was the first semester that UTEP used the TSIA as its placement exam. Faculty believe that the change in placement exams temporarily impacted enrollment into English 0111. Likewise, as stated earlier, in Summer 2017, the state of Texas lowered the passing score on the writing portion of the TSIA. Thus, Developmental English had to change the score it used to place students into English 0111. A very conservative score was chosen; no students fell into the new placement parameters for English 0111, meaning no students enrolled in English 0111 in Fall 2017. A new placement score for English 0111 has been implemented for Fall 2018, and Developmental English anticipates increased enrollment at that time.

Typically, students pass English 0111. The 75% figure shown for Fall 2015 is average for the course. Table 3 shows, nevertheless, that far fewer students took English 0111 in Fall 2016 than in Fall 2015. Moreover, only 57% of the students who took English 0111 in Fall 2016 passed it. Part of the cause lies in a free Summer workshop that Developmental English offers to students who place bubble in reading and writing on the TSIA. Students who pass the Summer workshop are pro-

nounced college ready, so they do not take English 0111 in the Fall. The students who enroll in this Summer workshop usually are go-getters who have clear goals for college and want to succeed. Even though UTEP has offered the workshop since 2013, not many students participated in it until Summer 2016 when Developmental English changed its recruiting methods. The new recruiting methods doubled the number of students in the Summer workshop. As a result, English 0111 in Fall 2016 had far fewer students in it than the previous Fall semester.

However, Developmental English administrators cannot say that these students did poorly in English 0111 because they were less prepared students. This same student population did well in FYC. Of the 44 students who took English 0111 in Fall 2016, 57% passed English 0111, but 86% students passed FYC. It may be more important, then, to focus on student performance in FYC rather than in English 0111. Generally, students who take English 0111 do well in the FYC course as illustrated by the 80% who passed FYC in Fall 2015 and the 86% in Fall 2016.

In addition to saving these students tuition and fees and allowing them to take college-level courses immediately upon entering college, these workshops can help to increase the students' persistence toward a college degree.

Conclusion

Corequisite workshops clearly are beneficial to students, particularly those students who fall in the bubble range on the placement exam. In addition to saving these students tuition and fees and allowing them to take college-level courses immediately upon entering college, these workshops can help to increase the students' persistence toward a college degree. These students have the opportunity to see the benefit of the workshop as it covers materials pertinent to the FYC course they are concurrently taking. Without the workshop, students would have to wait a semester before taking the FYC course; they would first have to take a developmental English course that they may not see value in taking.

Table 3
English 0111 Results for Students Enrolled in Fall 2014, Fall 2015, Fall 2016, and Fall 2017

Term	Number Attempted 0111	Number Passed 0111	Percentage Passed 0111	Number Attempted FYC	Number Attempted FYC on First Attempt	Percentage Passed FYC	Fall GPA of 2.0 or Higher	Spring Retention
Fall 2014	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Fall 2015	92	69	75%	91	73	80%	79%	84%
Fall 2016	44	25	57%	44	38	86%	75%	73%
Fall 2017	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

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Appendix A

Introductions Module Informational Handout and Exercise
Introductions Module Informational Handout

The Introduction to Introductions!

The introductory paragraph to an essay normally has a two-fold job: to grab the reader's attention while introducing the topic of the essay, and to make clear the writer's focus and perspective of the topic, as shown in the thesis statement, which often appears as the last statement in the introductory paragraph and gives readers a "road map" for the entire essay.

Note on placement of thesis statement: Sometimes, a writer will not want to include the thesis statement in the introduction. For instance, if the thesis statement is highly controversial and the audience is likely to reject it before hearing the facts, a writer may choose to first present the evidence and gradually build up support for his or her point of view before stating the thesis explicitly. Keep in mind that your instructor may have very definite instructions about placement of the thesis statement in any particular assignment. Follow the instructor's instructions.

How does a writer grab the reader's attention and write an engaging introduction?

1. Ask a question related to the topic.
2. Tell a brief story (anecdote) related to the topic.
3. Introduce a surprising fact about the topic.
4. Describe a vivid image related to the topic.
5. Share a quote about the topic.

To write an effective introduction, a writer, for example, may choose to make a general statement about the topic, tell a brief story (anecdote), and then state the thesis. Most importantly, the thesis statement should flow naturally from the question, story, fact, image, or quote.

Introduction Module Discussion Board Assignment

1. Write/revise an introduction to the essay you are working on in your FYC class.
2. Upload your draft to your peer review group.
3. Read the introductions other members of your group have posted to the Discussion Board, hit "reply" to each student's message, and answer the following questions:
 - a. Does the introduction make you interested, even excited, about reading the rest of the essay? If not, what could you suggest to the writer to help make the introduction more engaging?
 - b. Does the introduction appear to present a topic to the reader that can be thoroughly discussed in the essay? If not, suggest that the writer further narrow down the focus. Give the writer ideas!
 - c. Does the introduction give enough information for the reader to understand the grounding for the writer's perspective on the topic? If not, suggest that the writer expand the introduction and include more background material (this could come in many forms!).
 - d. Let your writer know your overall perspective on his/her introduction!

Appendix B

Suggested Calendar of Module Assignments

- Week One Modules: Syllabus, Hybrid Course, Generating Ideas, Using a Dictionary
- Week Two Modules: The Writing Process, Thesis Sentences, Paragraphs, Previewing
- Week Three Modules: Introductions, Conclusions, Voice, Annotating, APA Format
- Week Four Modules: Plagiarism, Audience and Purpose, Description: Showing versus Telling
- Week Five Modules: Rhetorical Appeals, Essay Structure, Organizing Information
- Week Six Modules: Unity in Writing, Revision, Editing and Proofreading, Eliminating Wordiness
- Week Seven Modules: Coherence, Annotated Bibliography, Outlining a Text, Summarizing
- Week Eight Modules: Academic Writing Style, Classification, Reflecting
- Week Nine Modules: Comparison/Contrast, Process Analysis, Questioning
- Week Ten Modules: Argumentation, Argumentative Claims, Argumentative Evidence, Metacognition
- Week Eleven Modules: Counter-Argument, Integrating Sources, Interviewing
- Week Twelve Modules: Logical Fallacies, Narration/Expression
- Week Thirteen Modules: Writing Well
- Week Fourteen Modules: Stylistic Literary Techniques, Creating Metaphors