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Dyadic Micro-teaching (APLNG 412 Final)

**Description of pedagogical framework of Needs analysis in a genre-based approach to writing**

Needs analysis means that the instructors should find out who the users are, define their tasks and goals, their experience levels, what functions they want and need from a system, what information they want and need and understand how the users think the system should work. Therefore, needs analysis involves seeking and interpreting information about one’s students’ needs so that the course will address them effectively (Graves, 1996).

 Richterich (1980) and Brindley (1989) once conceptualized needs as “objective” and “subjective” needs. Objective needs was defined as “derivable from different kinds of factual information about learners”, and in this case, their current proficiency in foreign language writing. Subjective needs refers to “the cognitive and affective needs of the learner in the learning situation, derivable from information about affective and cognitive factors such as personality, confidence, attitudes, learners’ wants and expectations.”

In order to achieve the learners’ objective needs, the instructor could gather students’ background information before designing the course, which may include age, gender, country and culture, immigration status, profession, L1, L1 literacy and so on. According to Hyland (2003), the information could be collected by checking students’ enrollment documents, designing questionnaires for them, giving individual interviews, or through observations. It is also necessary to get the information about learners’ current L2 proficiency, which include language literacy and writing experiences. The instructor could design diagnostic tests and then make present situation analysis about the students. It is also trendy to take a look at the learners’ portfolio of prior work or their international certification. When constructing the need analysis, the information about learners’ goals in terms of how they will use or deal with foreign language writing outside of the classroom also needs to be collected. The methods for this could be individual interviews, student diaries, questionnaires and observations.

In order to assess the learners’ subjective needs, the instructor could gather information about students’ attitude toward the target language writing, toward learning, and toward themselves as learners; students’ expectations of themselves and of the course; and students’ preferences with respect to how they will learn (Graves, 1996). It could be collected through interviews with learners, examination of tasks, questionnaires and so on.

Both Graves (1996) and Hyland (2004) mentioned that it is effective to conduct a needs analysis more than once for a course. Graves (1996) proposed that it could be conducted in the planning stage, the teaching stage, and also the replanning stage. She also suggested that in some cases a precourse needs analysis is not necessary and appropriate since teachers don’t have chance to meet their students before the class so they just make assumptions. Hyland (2004) mentioned that determining needs should be a continuous process since instructors need to modify their teaching to better accommodate their students as they become more familiar with each other. It is possible that the original goals that they set up at first were too high or the students may have more knowledge of the target genre than was supposed. Therefore, needs analysis should combine with evaluation in order to make the course more effective and get improvement.

Hyland, K. (2003). Second language writing. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Hyland, K. (2004). Genre and second language writing. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Graves, K. (1996) Teachers as course developers. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Richterich, R. (1980) A model for the definition of language needs of adults. In Trim, Richterich, Van Ek, and Wilkins: 31-62.

Brindley, G. (1989) The role of needs analysis in adult ESL program design. In R.K. Johnson, ed.. The Second Language Curriculum. P. 63-78. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

**Lesson Plan for needs analysis: Needs analysis for Business Academia Genres**

**Context:** Freshman ESL undergraduates of the Smeal School of Business at Penn State. The class meets two times every week, each 1 hour 15 minutes long. This needs analysis session of 20 minutes is at the beginning of the first class for instructor to collect information of students needs and possibly modify the syllabus.

**Objectives:**

* Getting to know themselves and the language
* Negotiating the syllabus together

**Assumptions:**

Because of the diverse background of ESL students in the program, we assume the potential for a wide difference in English learning experiences, personal history, and thus English writing skill levels. This first class will either affirm this assumption or not in order for us to plan future lessons accordingly.

**Language Analysis:**

We have the opportunity of accessing a sample piece of writing (although free-writing) from the students. We assume that students have intermediate abilities of writing in terms of grammar and semantics, but not on pragmatics. This is a good reason for using genre-based approach to writing.

**Anticipated problems/solutions:**

1. Given that it’s the first meeting of the semester, students might have no specific ideas of what they will encounter in their undergraduate study. Students might struggle with free writing at this point of study, but we think with the guided questions, they should express their needs effectively.
2. The tentative syllabus we are providing to the students cover a large amount of material over the semester. We anticipate that they will have higher interest/needs level for some of the topics over others. Students might have difficulties discerning some of the listed topics at this point, and we need to be ready to explain those to them, which might take additional time than expected. However, we think it is necessary to spend additional time to clarify concepts in genre-based writing to students taking this course.

**Materials**

1. Guided writing questions:

**How long -** e.g. How long have you been involved in English writing for academic purposes?

**What -** e.g. What is the purpose of your writing? (E.g. class assignment, project proposal, reading summary, etc.)

**Which -** e.g. Which parts of the academic writing do you find most difficult?

**Who -** e.g. Who do you submit your writing assignments to? (E.g. advisor, course instructor, fellow students)

**Formality -** e.g. How formal does each of your writings need to be?

**How -** e.g. How much do you want/need to go beyond course required academic writing?

1. Questionnaire

See attachment.

1. Sample syllabus (curtailed to weekly schedule only):

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Week | Content |
| 1 | Writing for Business Audiences in an Academic Program |
| 2 | Academic writing formats: APA, MLA |
| 3 | Writing techniques: summarization |
| 4 | Writing techniques: argumentation |
| 5 | Writing techniques: compare and contrast |
| 6 | Writing letters for academic advisors and course professors |
| 7 | Writing reports: informational reports, progress reports |
| 9 | Writing reports: periodic reports, survey reports |
| 9 | Writing internship applications: CV, follow-up letters |
| 10 | Writing proposals: planning proposal, marketing proposal |
| 11 | Writing proposals: research proposal |
| 12 | Writing memos: formal analysis memo, mechanical analysis, etc. |
| 13 | Final presentation/assessment |

1. Detailed lesson plan.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Activity** | **Procedure** | **Materials** | **Focus** | **Time** |
| Guided writing | Free writing on their own | Writing guide above | Share experiences, and address needs | 5min |
| Discussion | Share writing with partners, find similarities and differences | Their own writing pieces | Address learning deficiency and gaps between course objective and student needs | 5min |
| Questionnaire | Hand out and collect questionnaires  | Instructor-created questionnaire | For instructor’s after-class data collection | 5min |
| Discussion | Hand out syllabus, have students match with their writing pieces, and find discrepancies | Syllabus with focus on weekly schedule | Further explore“learning gap” | 5min |