



Using Needs Analysis as a Tool for ESP Curriculum Alignment

Abstract

The study seeks to determine the current English abilities of the students, as well as the knowledge and skills that they are currently acquiring from an ESL academic writing class. The study then seeks to determine what knowledge and skills the students will eventually need in order to succeed in a required university English composition course. The purpose of the study is to discover ways in which ESL academic writing class might be revised or supplemented in order to better prepare the ESL students for the English composition course. In order to accomplish this task, the researchers conducted a present situation analysis, a target situation analysis, and a discourse analysis.

Data Collection

A number of data collection methods were used, including questionnaires, document analysis, and classroom observation. The results of the study suggest that the ESL students would benefit from increased attention to essay planning and organization, critical reading, and academic vocabulary building.

Data analysis & Discussions

Present Situation Analysis:

1. Analysis of the ESL academic writing class syllabus.
2. Analysis of ESL academic writing class observation results.
3. Writing tutorial student survey data.
4. Writing sample data.

Target Situation Analysis

1. Analysis of the composition course documents.
2. Analysis of composition classroom observations.
3. Analysis of the composition teacher survey.

Discourse Analysis

1. Analysis of the Moves, Features, Formatting and Mistakes in the composition Essays
2. Degree of Commonness or Rarity of Vocabulary used in the Exemplar Essays
3. Vocabulary from the Exemplar Essays NOT Found in First 1,000 Most Common Words in the VP Compleat Corpus

Limitation: During our present situation analysis, we conducted only two classroom observations of the ESL academic writing class , and we neglected to use a survey to elicit additional information from the course instructor. For these reasons, our data may not adequately capture the manner in which reading and writing instruction is currently being provided in that course.

Results

Present Situation Analysis

An analysis of student writing samples determined that the students do indeed struggle with writing essays, particularly in the areas of planning, coherence, and concept development, as well as in the use of conjunctions, relative pronouns, prepositions and parallel structure.

Data from our observations suggest that the students also struggle with forming questions and well-supported opinions during critical examinations of a text.

Discourse Analysis & Target Situation.

The results suggest that ESL students who proceed the required university English composition course will benefit from having a strong foundation in critical reading, essay planning and organization, and academic vocabulary. Listening and grammar skills, according to our data, are comparatively less important for student success. Our results indicate that speaking is also a less critical skill for the English composition course, though students may benefit from practice using language in order to ask questions, seek clarification, and request additional help outside of class.

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Summary of Strengths, Weaknesses, and Mixed Results Observed in the Writing Samples

Strengths	Mixed	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Developing intro paragraphs- Using linking/transitional words- Using keyword repetition- Using personal pronouns- Affixes (prefixes and suffixes)- Synonyms and antonyms- Verb tense	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Sentence structure- Word choice	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Addressing all parts of a task- Supporting main ideas- Developing body paragraphs- Conjunctions- Relative pronouns- Collocations- Coherence- Prepositions, parallel structure

Academic Composition

Course Materials come from three main sources:

1. Teacher- and student-generated texts
2. Graff, G. & Birkenstein, C. (2014). *They say, I say: The moves that matter in academic writing*. New York, NY: W.W. Norton and Company.
3. Oshima, A., Hogue, A., & Ravitch, L. (2014). *The Longman academic writing series* (Fifth ed., Ser. 4). White Plains, NY: Pearson.

Academic Composition Lesson Plan

The Quote Sandwich (Adapted from *They Say/I Say*, pp. 41-5)
The Dangling Quote and Why You Should Avoid It

Top slice: Introducing the Quotation

Here are some templates from *They Say/I Say*:

X states, “_____”
As the prominent philosopher X puts it,
“_____” According to X, “_____”
X agrees when she writes, “_____”
X complicates the matter when she writes,
“_____”

Meat & veggies: The Quote

Bottom slice: Explaining the Quotation

Basically, X is saying...
In other words, X believes...
In making this comment, X argues that... X is insisting that...
The essence of X’s argument is that...

