

WDI Final Report – May 24th, 2016

LIN205 English Grammar II (Winter session)

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Summary of the writing instruction component:

- Each lecture started with a 30-minute section called “Grammar for Writers” in which students were provided with suggestions and guidelines (e.g. the use of evaluative language, objectivity of reporting verbs in writing, the use of summary reminder phrases, rules for punctuation, rules for capitalization) meant to help students with the writing assignments for LIN205.
- Dr. Michael Kaler from the Robert Gillespie Academic Centre presented a one-hour workshop on “Writing Paragraphs” during the lecture on Feb. 24th. His presentation focused on topic sentences, transitional words/expressions and creating cohesion in paragraphs, information meant to support students with writing their assignments. The feedback I have received from the students has been positive.
- A one-hour workshop run by Dr. Kaler (RGAC) and attended by the four TAs in the course was scheduled and held on Feb. 8th. The aim of the workshop was to provide extra support for the TAs in organizing and teaching one of the tutorials focusing on the assignment that required students to write a critique of the textbook we used in LIN205. During this meeting, Dr. Kaler provided the TAs with guidelines and examples of how to help students approach the assignment successfully. Both the TAs and the students found the information relevant and useful.
- Detailed feedback on the writing assignments with comments and suggestions for improvement was given to all students.

Summary of the writing activities undertaken by students involved in the project:

- Assignments and course materials were designed in a scaffolding fashion that involved structuring the writing tasks in a systematic way to support the students’ learning objectives. Thus, there were three writing assignments that were marked and that required the students to develop 1) full sentences, 2) full paragraphs; and 3) full essays. The course material was

designed to provide support and information for each of the assignments. In addition, for the first two assignments, TA support was offered in the students' tutorials.

Evaluation of the project's effectiveness

- Given that students received both my support during lectures as well as the TAs support during tutorials, in addition to the invited lecture of Dr. Michael Kaler, the effectiveness of the project was high and quite successful. Students expressed their appreciation for the learning they had done through completing these assignments and taking this course, as can be seen from some of the students' evaluations: "Tasks that were embedded into the weekly lectures allowed for discussion and greater comprehension of material just covered, and for the application of knowledge, which enables us to grasp a concept more easily than just assigning readings and chapter questions for students to do alone at home"; "The grammar tips at the beginning of the lecture were also intellectually stimulating. It let me reflect on my writing and I was able to use what I learned in other courses which requires essays. I believe this will also serve as a useful tool in my future writing."
- My overall impression is that the instruction had a positive effect on the students' writing and this reflected into their assignments' marks where there is progression from a class average of C- for the first writing assignment to a B- for the last writing assignment.

Plans for future developments/modifications

- The students need continuous support for their writing that is offered in this course. Therefore, I would continue dedicating time in my lecture to writing strategies and offering students guidelines for effective writing. Another thing I would do is dedicate half of the tutorial time to writing strategies and half to mechanics (grammar, punctuation, etc.). This way, the students are able to apply what they learn in the lecture and also to receive customized feedback in a smaller setting.
- Very importantly, I would continue to enlist the help of the specialists from the Robert Gillespie Academic Centre since the experience we had this year as well as last year was very positive. I think that their presence in lectures and tutorials as well as ongoing collaboration between the instructors, TAs and writing specialists increases the odds and degree of success in this course.

