

Designing Activities that Enhance Student Learning

Please use this form to describe a teaching activity that you have modified or developed (or will modify or develop) in response to the working group sessions.

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Role (*circle one*): Faculty Member Graduate Student/GSI Other _____

Home Department(s): French

Course(s) in which you would use this teaching activity: French 3-4

Activity Title Traits of Writing

Description:

Please give a short synopsis of the activity and its learning goals, maximum 100 words.

In this activity, students and instructors develop a shared metalanguage for talking about writing and the writing process in French. At the beginning of both French 3 and French 4, courses in which students produce several, multi-page texts in the target language, instructors have the opportunity to situate students' writing as a discursive practice that helps them build specific skills in SLA but also a more global awareness of types of writing. Two ultimate goals are for students to recognize the class-specific use of the writing process and for instructors and students to uncover the cultural similarities and differences that writing in a foreign language can reveal.

If this is an activity you have used in the past but now will modify in response to the Working Group sessions, please describe the activity as you previously conducted it:

This past semester was the first time that I piloted teaching explicitly the writing process and the discrete traits of writing to my students. My presentation was more teacher-centered than student-centered; namely, I provided the vocabulary and ideas for talking about writing as I saw it. These Working Group sessions made me think about how I could ask students to reflect upon their own understanding of writing, particularly academic writing, and from those discussions, bring about the traits of writing which we will develop through the course.

Describe the changes you made or will make to the activity and the reasoning behind these changes.

I would like to involve students at this level of L2 learning in actively engaging with the writing that they will be doing. By providing prompts (in French or English) that asks them to reflect on their previous experiences with writing, they will have the opportunity to see themselves as active participants in their own learning. Often, writing assignments appear only as tasks to students and not opportunities to reflect on both the writing process itself as well as students' own journey of personal expression.

I would like to consecrate the first writing workshop of the semester as the space in which to have students reflect individually on writing, work in pairs to discuss what does "good writing" look like, and, as a whole class, generate lists of elements of "good writing." From there, an instructor could present the course's expectations for writing and show how their ideas match with the course expectations.

Which session(s) of the Working Group influenced the changes you made or will make to this activity? How so?

The sessions with Jean Lave and Rosemary Joyce and with Lawrence Lowery were the most influential because those speakers spoke directly to what students are capable of doing, especially when learning is situated in a community of practice. Their talks made me rethink why and how we have our students write critically in another language.

How will you assess the effectiveness of this activity in enhancing student learning?

Informally, the quality of subsequent class discussions about writing and about texts will reveal the effectiveness of this first lesson. Formally, the rubrics in class will match the traits of writing identified in class as standards; assessment will feel authentic to students as it will be clear and based on logical and previously presented ideas which they helped to identify.

If this is a new activity developed in response to the Working Group sessions, please describe the activity:

Which session(s) of the Working Group influenced your development of this activity? How so?

Have you used the activity in the classroom yet? If so, please describe its effectiveness. If not, how you will assess its enhancement of student learning.