California State University, San Bernardino

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Project on Designing Activities for Teaching Grammar

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Project Design for ENG 3320 Project (Teaching a Grammatical Construction)
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<u>Course</u>
ENG 3320: Second Language Acquisition (semester course)
Taken by English majors who want to teach English in high school or community college
Focuses on theories of L2 acquisition and approaches to L2 teaching

<u>Project Title</u>
Designing Truly Effective Materials for Teaching Grammar
or
Designing Materials that Facilitate Grammar Learning

<u>Entry Event</u>
(see below for set up)

<u>Driving Question</u>
What classroom activities could help students truly acquire a grammatical construction?

<u>Subject</u>
Teaching of grammatical constructions (with adolescent and adult English Language Learners in mind as the student population)

<u>Key Concepts</u>
a. Language teaching methods
     --underlying philosophies about learning
     --techniques

b. Principles of activity design/materials development

c. Learning needs

d. SLA concepts: factors that play a role in SLA
     --input
     --output opportunities
     --feedback
     --noticing
     --connecting language to something meaningful to learners (to promote memory)
     --motivation/investment
     --social and psychological distance

e. Existing materials for teaching grammar (including recent materials focused on teaching academic language in high school contexts—see Bunch,Schleppegrell, and others).

<u>Significance and Relevance</u>
--There can be fear/disdain of/about the teaching of grammar in some schools of thought of language and writing.   Some have concerns that teaching grammar is unmotivating and ineffective and gives students a false sense that language use is about correctness in form and not about expression.

--But grammar teaching can be done in rich, engaging ways that help students understand language forms and their communicative functions.

--ENG 312 students—many of whom will be teaching English language arts or writing in high school and community college--will gain confidence about teaching of grammar through this project.

<u>Engage critical thinking</u>
Students will compare materials that have already been developed on grammatical constructions, identify elements that relate to our course concepts, and evaluate the potential effectiveness/areas for improvement of these materials accordingly. They will come up with tweaks on these materials as well as their own unique activities for teaching their selected grammatical construction. The materials they evaluate (and potentially also the ones they create) will be in different modalities.

<u>Project Sketch</u>

Snapshot
Students—in groups of 3-5—will select a particular grammatical construction relevant to a reading or writing assignment in an English class they imagine themselves teaching; and design a set of class activities for teaching that construction. The teaching can be either explicit or implicit.

Set up

- Before this point in the course, we will have covered various concepts in L2 acquisition as well as teaching methods.

- We would have also looked at and evaluated various example materials and activities.

- I will need to collect ESL teaching textbooks as E-books and hopefully the library can purchase them with unlimited student access.

- I will need to take attendance consistently throughout the course

- Group assignments (maybe group leader assignment)—I like Mandi's way of doing this for her Art class at SBVC.

- Imagining the classroom contexts and student populations

- Imagining the reading text and/or writing assignment that form part of the context for the grammar activities

- Project parameters, requirements, and guidance
  - Two options for teaching contexts/student populations
- 11th/12th grade/freshman community college English class (that includes English learners)
- class for beginning ESL refugees

- Each context will have a reading assignment and a related writing prompt, as well as a list of grammatical constructions that could potentially be relevant to reading and/or writing assignment.   (Students have to figure out how they could be relevant)

- Explain purposes of doing this project

  - Deepening knowledge of important concepts in language learning and teaching

  - Learning to create language/grammar teaching materials relevant to their own future teaching contexts

  - Gaining experience with explaining and justifying one's own teaching approaches and materials (an important skill for future job interviews)

  - Developing skill in teamwork, negotiation, synthesis of ideas and conflict management (21st century skills)

Project steps that each group will do

1. Set up ground rules for working together effectively
2. Decide on tasks they will need to do to complete this project
3. Read through the reading sample and writing prompt sample; discuss how the different grammatical construction choices would be relevant to the reading and writing prompt, and decide on a grammatical construction to focus on. [maybe flip order of steps 2 and 3]
4. Come up with some preliminary ideas for teaching the selected construction in ways that would relate it back to the reading or to the writing prompt
5. Research/find other materials that have been developed for teaching that construction. (I will suggest some resources to start with.)
6. Examine and discuss elements that work well in those materials in terms of the principles of L2 learning we've discussed.
7. Discuss how these effective elements could be incorporated and/or adapted into the preliminary materials ideas from step 4.
8. Drawing on ideas from steps 5-7, design (in a detailed fashion) 3 activities for teaching the grammatical construction.

   The activities should:
   - be designed to facilitate learners' deep learning/acquisition of that construction; toward this end, students should:
     - design the input in the activity so that it is i+1;
     - offer opportunities for learner output using the construction;
     - promote learner noticing of the construction;
     - promote deep learning by making it meaningful and memorable to learners—in part through connecting it to the learners' reading and/or writing assignment.
   - incorporate principles and techniques of one or more of the teaching approaches that we've discussed thus far in the course.

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- be purposefully sequenced to facilitate learning of that construction; toward this end, students can:
  - design the activities so that they provide appropriate amounts of guidance/freedom to learners given their place in the activity sequence
- have detailed, written instructions for how the activity will work (what the teacher will do and what the students will do at each step in the activity); and examples of what students would say or do at each stage of the activity
- include any handouts that the learners will be given

9.   Each member of the group individually writes a 4 page essay offering a rationale for each activity—one that explains how the activity would facilitate learners' acquisition of the grammatical construction in light of what we have learned in this course about factors promoting acquisition (input, output, noticing, et al) and the value of particular aspects of teaching methods we've covered.   In the essay, the student will also explain what they learned from doing the project.

10. Each group demonstrates one-two of their activities (20 minutes for each group)

11. I will make a compilation of their activities and post it somewhere online—Blackboard or on a website with their permission.

Project evaluation

<u>Formative Assessment</u>
Each student completes twice-weekly S.W.A.G cards (about the tasks s/he will complete that week toward the project). I will read those cards and check in with the students on what they have done. They will possibly turn in drafts to me along the way of their individual parts.

I will give the groups feedback on a rough sketch of their activity sequence.

<u>Summative Assessment</u>
Group project gets a grade.

Each student's individual work (including their effectiveness in the process) gets a grade.

(See Andrew's grading rubric)

Other
Look into "flipped grid video platform"
Look into "Behance" for creating a website.