**GLCA: Teaching Writing to Multilingual Writers, *College of Wooster, November 1-3, 2019***

***Assignment Design and Scaffolding***

**Student Activity: Disciplinary Writing Discovery**

**Rationale**

When faced with a challenging writing task, novice writers often fill in the gap in their knowledge of assignment expectations by over-relying on past experiences with writing, whether in that discipline or in other disciplines (Cheng, 2019). For example, a first-year student might approach a “critical reflection/reaction” assignment with the lens of the report genre so well-practiced in high school, and multilingual international first-years are similarly likely to reproduce the opinion, cause and effect, and compare/contrast essays that comprised the bulk of their English writing practice leading up to performance on standardized English exams such as the TOEFL. Furthermore, many multilingual students lack awareness or understanding of Western rhetorical patterns of writing due to cultural and socio-educational values and assumptions (McCool, 2009). In many international contexts, critique of well-respected experts is considered taboo, connection of evidence to an argument may be seen as demeaning of a reader’s intelligence, and referencing of the ideas of others is seen as unnecessary or even dispreferred. Therefore, multilingual writers will benefit from writing instruction that starts by drawing their attention to the relevant communicative features in a given context (Schmidt, 1990; Mackey, 2006). This explicit awareness-raising activity brings multilingual writers’ attention to the variety of writing types within one discipline and across different disciplines, as well as the specific language features that are used to accomplish discourse moves typical of undergraduate writing in English.

**Considerations**

This activity would be an excellent first step in scaffolding student writing throughout a course. It would also provide faculty with early insight into students’ writing expectations and pre-existing knowledge as well as their ability to notice disciplinary writing conventions they’re currently unfamiliar with. If completed early in the semester, this insight could allow faculty to adjust instructional plans to include additional scaffolded activities as needed. This assignment could also be repeated multiple times throughout the semester as part of each writing assignment cycle. Repeating the activity would provide a measurable evaluation of student development in disciplinary writing awareness throughout the course of the semester.

Students should work in pairs or groups in class when completing this for the first time. Additionally, faculty may want to consider modelling the completion of the exercise in a think-aloud manner for the class before having students try it on their own (Wette, 2014). It may be helpful for the entire class to work with the same two papers (pre-selected by faculty from MICUSP or from their own sample collections). This activity would work well in introductory courses or in writing intensive courses with students from a variety of disciplinary backgrounds. An entire class period should be reserved for the activity.

**MICUSP (Michigan Corpus of Upper-Level Student Papers)**

**WRITING DISCOVERY ACTIVITY**

<http://eli-corpus.lsa.umich.edu/>

TASK ONE: DISCIPLINARY AWARENESS

Pick a “discipline” (subject) of the class that you are taking.

Rank the paper types by the most frequent to the least frequent, and add their percentage of the discipline collection.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Report | Argumentative Essay | Research Paper | Critique |
| Proposal | Response Paper | Creative Writing | Other? |

DISCIPLINE \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

#1 \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_%

#2 \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_%

#3 \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_%

#4 \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_%

#5 \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_%

#6 \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_%

#7 \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_%

#8 \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_%

TASK TWO: GENRE AWARENESS WITHIN THE DISCIPLINE

In the same discipline, select one paper from two different paper types (recommended limit is 2,000 words at the most).

Rate the papers on a scale of 1-4 for these features:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Paper Type #1 \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ | Paper Type #2 \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ |
| Directness of Purpose Statement |  |  |
| Length of Intro |  |  |
| Clear Purpose for Paragraphs |  |  |
| Frequency of use of Logical Relations phrases (additionally, because, if, consequence, however, for example, etc.) |  |  |
| Frequency of Word Repetition (or Synonym Replacement) |  |  |
| Frequency of use of long subjects in topic sentences of paragraphs |  |  |
| Length of Conclusion |  |  |

TASK THREE: CROSS-DISCIPLINARY GENRE COMPARISON

Now select 1 paper from Task 2 and compare it with the same paper type from a different discipline.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Paper Type \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ | Discipline #1 \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ | Discipline #2 \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ |
| Directness of Purpose Statement |  |  |
| Length of Intro |  |  |
| Clear Purpose for Paragraphs |  |  |
| Frequency of use of Logical Relations phrases (additionally, because, if, consequence, however, for example, etc.) |  |  |
| Frequency of Word Repetition (or Synonym Replacement) |  |  |
| Frequency of use of long subjects in topic sentences of paragraphs |  |  |
| Length of Conclusion |  |  |
| Directness of Purpose Statement |  |  |

TASK FOUR: NOTICING

What have you noticed about different types of papers in the same subject?

What have you noticed about the same paper type in different subjects?

What have you noticed about academic writing overall?

What changes will you make to your own writing?