

Assignment and Lesson Plan Background

In these lesson plans, I introduce and support students in developing a multi-part final project for a language seminar I facilitate. I worked to create lesson plans and assignments that reflect the following best practices for teaching writing in multicultural classrooms that I discovered through my research:

- Affirm home languages and literacies by including them in the classroom, and support the continued development of those languages and literacies.
- Create opportunities for students to write about things that matter to them and for real audiences.
- Explicitly teach Standard Academic English in context.
- Foster collaboration, community, and growth mindset.

For reference, the seminar meets once a week, and there are between 3-6 students.

Lesson 1

Students will begin to articulate how a language they speak (other than Standard English) is connected with and impacts their identity, relationships, and experiences. Students will begin to consider how different languages or dialects function effectively in different contexts. Note: all students in our program are multilingual or are currently learning a second language.

0-5 Opener: the power of words

- Turn to a partner and tell your partner the story of your name. What do you know about why you were given your name? Does your name belong to a family member or hold special meaning to a family member? Does it relate to a cultural or religious tradition? What language background does it come from?
- Facilitator: For many of us, the language that comprises our name reveals important things about our identities, families, cultures, and communities. In fact, all language reflects culture and community. Over the next few weeks, we'll explore the power and personal importance of the languages we speak, and we'll do some real writing for real audiences in those languages.

5-15 Choose a language or dialect that you speak other than Standard English. Using a graphic organizer/mind map, brainstorm and reflect about how you use that language. With whom do you speak it and who did you learn it from? When do you speak it? Where do you speak it? What do you talk about when you speak it? How do you feel when you speak it?

15-25 Create a language collection. List words, phrases, and idioms you (or those you speak with) use often when you speak that language. Next to each entry, write the Standard English definition.

25-30 Turn to a partner. Discuss: what was the process of creating a language collection like for you? What stood out to you? How do you feel about the Standard English translations you created?

30-50 Group reading of several odes to languages.

- Choose from: ("Search for My Tongue," by Sujata Bhatt, "My Faithful Mother Tongue" by Czeslaw Milosz, "Mother Tongue" by Donna Hilbert, "Bilingual Sestina" by Julia Alvarez, and "Lexicon" by Naomi Shihab Nye)

-Annotate and then discuss: what are the authors saying about their language? How do they feel about it, and how does it relate to their experiences, relationships, and identity?

-Annotate and then discuss: what characteristics of form do the poems have in common? What have we learned about qualities of effective odes?

50-60 Begin writing your own ode to the language you've reflected on today. Complete a draft for next session.

Lesson 2

Students will apply their knowledge about language, identity, and community by planning and creating a piece of writing in a language other than Standard English.

0-15 Sharing Odes

-Each person reads their ode aloud.

-Those listening respond by making a personal connection to something in the poem or by pointing out something in the poem that was powerful, interesting, or effective for them.

15-40 Introduce assignment: write a piece in this language or dialect for an audience that matters to you about a topic that matters to you and the audience.

-Begin the brainstorming process by listing in a chart:

-The "who" (who are individuals or groups who speak this language that matter to them)

-The "what" (what issues, topics, problems, values, or ideas matter in the context of the student's relationship with these individuals and groups)

-The "how" (what mediums or forms of writing might be most effective)

-Facilitator models this brainstorming process first, and shares several sample mentor texts created by previous students or staff.

-Students work independently on their brainstorming charts.

40-60 Students work independently to plan/outline and begin drafting their piece of writing. Facilitator conferences with each student individually to support them in solidifying their topic/audience/form, or developing outline or draft. Students are asked to bring a complete draft to next session.

Lesson 3

Students will consider the utilities and limitations of different languages and dialects they know.

Students will support one another's writing by providing feedback and working collaboratively to create a plan for sharing students' writing. Students will identify and study elements of Standard Academic English.

0-5 Reflect on the process: in one word or phrase, describe what the process of writing your draft was like. Share your word or phrase with the group.

5-30 Feedback and publishing plans

-If students have peers in the group who speak the language of their piece, students meet together to read one another's pieces and provide reader-response feedback.

-Questions for feedback-giver:

- What impact does the author's use of language have on the reader?

- What main ideas and emotions did you take away from the piece?

- What words, phrases, lines, or images stick with you?

- Where were you most and least engaged?

- Questions for the author:

- What do you hope your audience will understand and feel after reading your piece?

- Where did you struggle the most in your writing?

- What are you proud of in this piece?

- If students do not have peers in the group who speak the language of their piece, those students will conference with a peer or the facilitator to make a plan to seek feedback from another person (friend, sibling, parent, community member) who speaks that language.

- In pairs, students will help one another develop a plan to share their piece with their intended audience. What steps need to be taken? The facilitator will model this by sharing an example of his/her plan to share his/her piece of writing.

30-35 Introduce final portion of the project: a report and analysis of their piece of writing (written in Standard Academic English), 800 word min.

- Facilitator leads discussion: why do we learn Standard Academic English in school? In what contexts is it useful or necessary? In what contexts is it not useful or necessary?

- Students' report and analysis will address the following questions:

- What was their process of planning and writing the piece?

- Why did they choose the audience and topic they selected?

- What feedback did they receive from their same-language reader, and how did they use that feedback?

- What was challenging about writing the piece? What was rewarding?

- How did they share the piece with their audience? How was it received?

- What did they learn about language, writing, their communities, or their identity while writing the piece?

35-55 Standard Academic English Mini-lessons

- As a group, create a list of elements that characterize Standard Academic English. These elements should include academic tone and diction, unique analysis and insight, linear organization, use of evidence, and varied sentence structure.

- Ask students to self assess and share with the facilitator: which elements are the most challenging?

- Based on students' self assessments, facilitator leads one or two mini-lessons on topics that are identified as challenging by many students.

55-60 Final instructions: Submit a complete draft of the report and analysis by next session.

The next session will be comprised of individual conferences with the facilitator. All portions of the project (the ode, the piece of writing in a language other than Standard

English, and the report and analysis in Standard Academic English) are due on the following session, during which students will share their project with their peers orally.