アカデミック・ライティングのためのカリキュラム開発

Curriculum Development for Academic Writing

トーマス・パルス
文化政策学部国際文化学科

Thomas PALS
Department of International Culture, Faculty of Cultural Policy and Management

　本稿では、静岡文化芸術大学（SUAC)の専任講師と非常勤講師が、授業や教師間に一貫性のあるアカデミックライティングコースを作り上げるために、どのように協力し、実践しているかについて焦点を当てる。特に語学教官が共通のカリキュラムを効果的に実施するための８つのキーポイント：コースの特質、目的、編成、教材、宿題、採点、フィードバック、そして最終的な成績について説明する。また、教官がコースカリキュラムの有効性をどのように効果的に点検したかについても報告する。最終章では、コース終了時点で考慮した改良項目についても述べる。

　The focus of this report is to explain how full and part-time instructors at Shizuoka University of Art and Culture (SUAC) collaborated on and implemented a cohesive Academic Writing course. The paper will address the eight key issues for successful implementation of common curricula for language instructors: type of course, goals, organization, materials, homework, scoring, feedback, and final grades. It will also explain how instructors checked the efficacy of implementing the course curricula. Finally, it will report on upcoming changes in the course curricula.

What kind of language course is both conducive and beneficial for collaboration?

The study of any language entails developing the basic language skills of reading, writing, speaking, and listening. While it is impossible to study only one skill at a time, having a focus on individual skills is the most common coursework design for language courses. Given this fact, it is important to use tried and tested specific course curricula. In addition, it makes sense to collaborate on courses in which instructors can most easily reach a consensus for each aspect of the course. For these reasons, instructors at SUAC chose to collaborate on the Upper Level English Communication III writing course（**国際英語上級III**）. The general curricula for the first year writing course had already been established. Expanding on the ideas from the first year Composition 1 course（**英語表現法**）, taught by two full time instructors working in tandem, was a natural foray into use for the full and part-time instructors who taught the upper level writing course. Additionally, since academic writing has set rules and organizational patterns, instructors could quickly reach a consensus on the content of the upper level course. Although the content was the same, how each individual instructor taught the content was up to the instructor. They were free to use their own methodology while collaborating with each other on any aspect of the course.

What were the goals of the course?

The main goal of the course was to further develop academic writing skills. These skills were broken down into five distinct areas: organization, paragraph structure, vocabulary, grammar, and content.

How was the course organized?

Since all four sections of the course met on the same weekday, there were no scheduling conflicts in the weekly class outline. The main topic of each week was predetermined. The overall grading criteria were determined by the four instructors teaching the course. The scoring allowed for a fair breakdown of student effort and output. Students garnered an in-class score for 10 weeks of the course based solely on their effort within the class. Five essays were scored on a ten-point scale. One essay was scored as a bonus essay. See Figure 1.

What common materials were used?

Instructors used a common teacher-created Essay Writing Guide containing the basics of academic essay writing. Handouts targeting specific areas to help students with individual problems supplemented this handbook. Instructors were free to use or not use these

Figure 1- Course Schedule and Grading Criteria

handouts. In addition, an online repository where instructors could upload handouts was created. See Figure 2. Instructors could share quality materials that they created for use by all teaching the course. This unique feature fostered an atmosphere of mutual faculty development.

Figure 2 - Supplemental Materials Upload System

What common homework was assigned?

There were nine common homework assignments given to all students taking the course. Three of the assignments were worksheets designed to help students work through and understand the Writing Guide Handbook. These worksheets were assigned during the first three weeks of the course.

A total of six essays were assigned to students. Each essay was assigned on a two-week cycle. First, students were given the essay topic. They then had one week to write a first draft of their essay. After receiving additional instruction in class, students had one week to rewrite their first draft. Students submitted their final drafts via an online submission and feedback system before the next lesson. The first five essays were original essays written by the students. These essays were 300 words in length.

The final essay was a rewrite of one of the student's first two essays. This essay was expanded to 400 words. The topics for the essays were (HW=Homework Week #):

· HW6 - What do you think is a good career choice for you? Why?
· HW8 - What are two design features you would like to have in your home? Why?
· HW10 - If you could meet any historical person, dead or alive, who would it be? Why? What would you want to ask them? What would you want to tell them?
· HW12 - What is a mistake or blunder that you have made? What happened? What did you learn from this mistake? Explain.
· HW13 - Bonus Essay - What kind of volunteer work would you like to do? Why? OR What kind of volunteer work would you least like to do? Why?
· HW14 - Rewrite and expand on your ideas for HW4 or HW6.

How was the homework scored?

The initial worksheets were included as part of the in-class scoring system, which constituted 50% of the overall grade. Each essay was scored based on a ten-point grading rubric. The grading rubric consisted of five skill areas: overall essay organization, paragraph structure, vocabulary, grammar, and content. Students could earn from zero to two points, in half point increments, for each area. Please note that students could view the rubric in either Japanese or English. See Figure 3. The five essays accounted for 50% of the overall grade. One essay was considered a bonus essay. Students were given extra credit for voluntarily completing this essay. The extra credit essay was given the same ten-point value as the other essays.

What kind of feedback was given?

Students received both individual and group feedback from their instructor via the online submission and feedback system for each essay. Instructors gave individual feedback to stu-

dents targeting structure, discourse, and grammar. Students were required to complete a set of computer-generated follow-up exercises based on their instructor's feedback. For example, if the instructor highlighted problems with a student's thesis, subject/verb agreement, and word forms, students were required to answer a set of questions designed to help them overcome these weak points.

Group feedback targeted common areas where many students needed addition support. For example, if many students struggled with parallel structure and dangling modifiers, all students would receive an explanation of these problem areas. See Figure 4.

Finally, students could comprehend their score for each essay by viewing the grading rubric for that essay. The score for each area of the essay was highlighted on the rubric. See Figure 5.

Figure 3 - Grading Rubric (Japanese Version)

Figure 4 - Individual Follow-up Exercises and Group Feedback

How were the students graded?

Instructors applied an open policy towards grading. Students were able to access both their weekly scores and essay scores online at anytime during the term. If students had any question about their score, they were free to discuss the situation with their individual instructors. Final grades were determined by adding the in-class scores with the essay scores.

How did the instructors check the efficacy of the course curricula?

Since all instructors were grading students using the same criteria, it was important for each instructor to be able to quickly check if their scoring matched not only the criteria but also other instructors. Scores were collated from each section of the course being taught. Instructors were able to compare how they were scoring both in-class tasks and essays compared to an aggregate of other instructors teaching the course. The bar graph represents an individual instructor's section of the course. The line graph represents the aggregate of the other three sections of the course. See Figures 6 and Figure 7.

Figure 5 - Highlighted Grading Rubric (English Version)

Figure 6 - In-class Scores
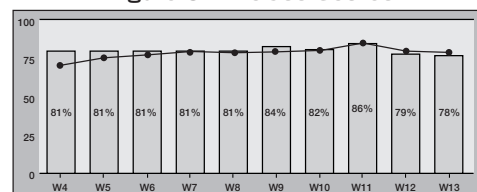
From the beginning of the term, all instructors were reliable in their evaluation of the in-class scores. However, the instructors were not as consistent with the essay scoring. Scores on the first essay were inconsistent from one section of the course to another. After the first essay, instructors were able to recalibrate the scoring criteria. From the second essay, scoring was reliable among all sections of the course.

In addition to instructors being able to compare their scoring with other instructors, they received feedback from students for each of the six essays. Once students received their homework feedback and completed the online follow-up exercise, they were asked a series of twelve questions for each essay. Eleven questions elicited answers using a Likert Scale. The final question was open ended. The survey questions were:

1. How much time did you spend writing this assignment?
2. How much time did you spend on the feedback and follow-up exercises for this assignment?
3. The topic of this assignment was interesting.
4. My instructor's in-class instruction helped me write this assignment.
5. The online writing tutorial video helped me write this assignment.

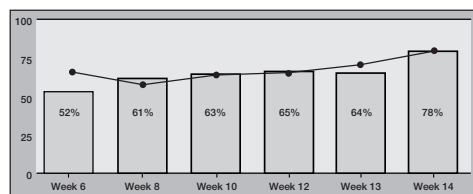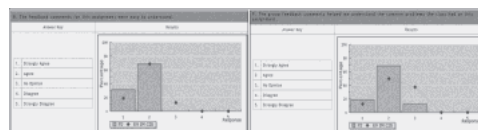### Figure 7 - Essay Scores

Figure 8 - Student Survey Results for Q8 and Q9 for HW10

6. I only used English when writing this assignment.
7. I understand the score that I received on this assignment.
8. The feedback comments for this assignment were easy to understand.
9. The group feedback comments helped me understand the common problems the class had on this assignment.
10. I would have liked to receive more feedback on this assignment.
11. I would have liked to perform more follow-up exercises on this assignment.
12. If you have any suggestions as to how the HW Feedback could be made better, please indicate below.

Instructors could access the results of the surveys online and make adjusts to the course as needed. As with the scoring feedback, instructors were able to see how their section of the course (bar graph) answered the questions compared to an aggregate of the other three sections of the course (line graph). See Figure 8.

What changes will be implemented in the future?

After the course was completed, instructors met to discuss further development of the course.They decided to make adjustments to the Upper Level English Communication III writing course（国際英語上級Ⅲ）that include a fine-tuning of course schedule and scoring. Homework due dates will start from the 4th week to speed up the pace of the course and allow for the bonus essay to become mandatory. The overall weight of the scoring of the course will remain. However, weeks in which rough drafts are due will be weighted slightly higher for the in-class score than weeks in which the final drafts were due.The hope of this change is to encourage better peer feedback. See Figure 9.

In addition to the scheduling and grading criteria updates, instructors have added more

than 100 preset feedback comments, instruction, and grammatical rules to the essay feedback system. These items cover a multitude of structure, discourse, and grammar problems. Instructors will be able to select and add the appropriate feedback comment(s) to student's individual or group feedback. Students will be able to view the preset feedback in either Japanese or English. The hope is that these preset items will facilitate even more cohesion in the feedback that students receive.

Summary

Careful planning and commitment by all of the instructors teaching the course was the key to making this collaboration a success. Considering class size and time spent per essay to provide quality feedback, part-time instructors should be commended not only for their contributions to the development of the course,

but also to their commitment to helping students improve their writing skills. Additionally, students taking the course should be commended for their hard work. The proof in the success of the course can best be defined in terms of the achievement of the course goals. Indeed the difference in the quality of the first essay HW6 and the final essay HW14 was reflected in student results. See Figure 10.

Curriculum development on both a program and course level takes time. However, with the teamwork and commitment of all instructors, further development of the course is assured.

References

Shawback, Michael, et al. (2008). *Online Education Guide*. Tokyo: Seibido.

Pals, Thomas, et al. (2008). *Essay Writing Guide*. Self Published. Shizuoka University of Art and Culture.

Figure 9 - New Course Schedule and Grading Criteria

Figure 10 - HW6 Grades and HW14 Grades