Book Review/Lesson Plan

TESOL 550: Second Language Pedagogy II

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**Introduction**

This paper reviews the pedagogical techniques and practice activities for the book *Writing from Within Intro* (Kelly & Gargagliano, 2004). The review covers the overall outline of the book, strengths and weaknesses, as well as appropriate context. In addition a lesson plan has been included adapted from Unit 1 in the book (Kelly & Gargagliano, 2004).

**The Learner**

*Writing from Within Intro* is written for low level learners (and can be used for beginning ESL/EFL students) who are just beginning to learn how to generate sentences, and draft paragraphs. This book creates activities that allow students to begin taking the steps necessary to succeed in writing academically while allowing them to express their personal, meaningful and ideal aspects of their lives. The activities within the book were generated in effort to inspire the writer to write rather than push them (Kelly & Gargagliano, 2004).

Overall, this book aims to teach students how to write sentences, generate and organize content, structure and sequence this content into paragraphs, review and edit what they have written and respond to their peers writing. The book’s central focus is on writing and only provides small paragraphs for students to read in which they can model their writing (Kelly & Gargagliano, 2004).

**Organization**
Each of the 12 units within the book centers on a writing assignment. There are five lessons in each unit which are broken up into three different areas: prewriting, writing, and post writing. The prewriting section of each unit includes activities for brainstorming, analyzing sentences, where students can analyze model sentences of a paragraph. Finally it includes organization activities, where students are able to generate content, learn expository organizational skills and effectively learn how to organize their paragraphs. The writing section provides students with model paragraphs and specific instructions for writing their paragraphs. The post writing section includes activities for editing, where students can take a closer look at structures and language. Under post writing are also activities for giving feedback to their peers. Finally, under the post writing section is an optional writing activity that allows the student to transfer their new writing skill to another communicative writing assignment (Kelly & Gargagliano, 2004).

While each of the 12 units written is developmental, they do not need to be followed in any particular order. However, it is important to note that within each unit, the lessons build upon each other and it is therefore impossible for the instructor to select just one lesson to teach from each unit. Each lesson must be taught in the order in which it is presented since each unit focuses on the process of writing (Kelly & Gargagliano, 2004).

Methods

Many of the writing assignments found within this book are introspective and meaningful. Examples of these types of assignments are: writing about an ideal partner or writing about something you regret. Other writing assignments are more task-based where students are required to write a movie review, or an advertisement. Other writing assignments develop academic writing, where students write a letter of introduction, and a thank you letter.
The book creates a nice balance of assignments that allow the student to write for purpose (a thank you letter, or letter of introduction) while also adhering to students interest by selecting topics from a variety of different areas that relate to students everyday lives (writing about an ideal partner or a good friend) (Kelly & Gargagliano, 2004).

The lessons within the book centers around process writing, where students write on topics presented in the unit with help through model paragraphs, and instruction as well as peer feedback. They go through the process of choosing the topic, gathering ideas, organizing their thoughts, drafting, and providing feedback. This book is also centered on the idea that the individual is the writer and creator in developing the ideas necessary to write their content. The activities are built to show the learner that they have the knowledge and skills necessary to develop the skill of writing. It teaches them that the more they practice the better they will write (Kelly & Gargagliano, 2004).

**Techniques**

Activities that promote awareness and require the student to give reason are incorporated within the book as well as controlled and communicative activities that help students move through the various processes of writing as outlined in each unit. In addition, various grammatical rules are incorporated into the units. It is important to note, that the units do not incorporate vocabulary activities or any training in dictionary use.

Examples of these techniques can be seen by looking at Unit 7, where students are to write a thank you letter. First students are to brainstorm some nice things someone has done for them recently and communicate and compare these answers with a partner. Next, students are to examine a model paragraph and find the sentence that explains why the writer is writing and
write a similar sentence. Next, students are to incorporate reasons for giving thanks. Student practice this by thanking three classmates for things they have done for them and sharing these with them orally. In this activity, the use of for + -ing is also demonstrated. In lesson 4, students begin the prewriting stage, where they select one person to give thanks to and begin generating sentences from prompts for their letter. In lesson 5, students are to organize their sentences by incorporating time markers such as before, while and after. In lesson 6, students read a model paragraph and begin writing their letter using the outline that is presented for them. In lesson 7, students are to focus on the use of before and after with comma use to ensure they have correct order of events. Finally, in lesson 8 students exchange their paragraph with a partner and provide feedback according to the rubric (Kelly & Gargagaliano, 2004).

**Adaption/Strengths & Weaknesses**

This specific text meets many of the academic and curriculum goals of my current teaching context. I currently teach adult beginning ESL students who have little to no writing experience in English. They are in my class to learn their first steps in academic writing. *While Writing from Within Intro*, provides numerous topics on students interests, it does not provide enough academic writing topics. I feel a good supplement to this text would be *First Steps in Academic Writing* (Hogue, 2008). This book provides more grammatical and sentence structures needed by my students and challenges them a bit more as it is written for a high-beginning learner.

I would highly recommend this book to those teaching beginning level ESL students. The writing topics within the book are excellent for students with various cultural backgrounds. The lessons introduce students to the effective writing processes and provide a clear outline for those
who may feel overwhelmed. The topics seek to motivate students and can easily be completed both in and outside the classroom. In addition, the controlled writing processes help students to develop the skill of becoming independent writers who will later self-monitor their writing.

Lesson Plan

Context and rationale

This lesson is designed for low-beginning ESL students of a Community College in Wyomissing, PA. There are five female students in the class and all are Spanish speaking. The class meets four times a week and spends an hour on writing each day. The majority of the students have very low L2 literacy skills and lack formal schooling beyond High School. After a needs assessment was conducted, it was determined that all students have little to no experience generating paragraphs in English and also lack the ability to generate proper sentence structure. It is therefore the goal of this course to provide students with the skills and practice necessary to improve upon both areas listed above before entering the Intermediate ESL course. In this course, the goal will be met by implementing lessons that involve a variety of task types. As Ferris & Hedgcock (2004) state, “a significant amount of class time be dedicated to the practice of writing, to the discussion of writing processes and to effective text construction strategies” (p. 102). This assignment will take place within the first week of the course.

Time: 60 minutes

Materials:
- White lined paper
- White board
- Handouts (Appendix A, B, C, D, E)

Outcomes:

- Students will be able to practice and become familiar with the three stages of writing (Prewriting, Writing & Post writing) through completion of the assignment.
- Students will be able to compose a letter of introduction by writing one to two paragraphs about themselves.
- Students will become familiar with using and and but to connect sentences.
- Students will demonstrate the use of greetings and closings by incorporating them into their letter of introduction.

Introduction of Assignment

Inform students that they will be writing a letter of Introduction to me. Through this assignment, they will learn about the three stages of the writing process: Prewriting, Writing and Postwriting. Through completing the tasks and activities, they will not only meet the goals of the lesson but they will also possess the skill of writing a letter of introduction that may assist them in their professional and personal life.

Resources: pages used directly from the text book: pg. 5 & 12 (Kelly & Gagagliano, 2004).

Resources adapted from the textbook: pg. 4, 10 & 13 (Kelly & Gagagliano, 2004).

Activities:

Prewriting - 20 minutes
Brainstorming: The teacher will first demonstrate a good way to brainstorm by presenting a brainstorming chart. This chart has been adapted from pg.4 of Writing from Within Intro (Kelly & Gagaglano, 2004). The teacher will present the example chart about herself (see Appendix A). Students will then be given 10 minutes to complete their own chart (See Appendix E).

Organization: Students will then look at the teacher’s letter of introduction example. The teacher will make note of the greeting, and closing and instruct students on how to organize and structure their letter. In addition, the teacher will provide them with additional expressions (Dear, Hello, Mrs. Ms. Miss) for greetings and closings (Sincerely, Yours, truly, Best wishes). The teacher will point students’ attention to the purpose for writing the letter by asking them to underline the sentence that explains why Mrs. Beck is writing. The teacher will also ask students to identify what topics Mrs. Beck talked about in her letter.

Writing - 20 minutes

Students will be given 20 minutes to write their own letter of introduction. During this time the teacher will circulate through the room ensuring students are on task and are following the structure that was gone over and given to them. They are encouraged to use their dictionaries and ask any questions they might have about spelling or grammar.

Post writing - 20 minutes

Editing: Students will be given the handout from pg. 12 Connecting sentences (See Appendix D) in Writing from Within Intro (Kelly & Gargaglano, 2004). I have chosen not to adapt this worksheet because it presents the material clearly and simply and is on the same academic level of my students. The teacher will go over the rules for and and but and provide additional examples on the board if necessary. In addition to editing their own letters of
introduction for places where they can insert *and* and *but*, they will also be instructed to edit their
papers for the correct use of Capitals and periods (which were reviewed in a prior lesson).

*Peer feedback*

Students will be given the peer feedback handout (Appendix C) to complete with a
partner of the teacher’s choosing. The students will have 10 minutes to complete this sheet. The
teacher will first go over all the questions with the students before they begin, ensuring they
understand. The teacher will circulate through the room while the students complete the handout,
answering any questions students may have and helping them to stay on task.
References


Appendix A

Brainstorming Chart

Mrs. Beck

- Married to a S.Korean
- 29 years old
- Graduate Student
- Daughter named Sohee
- ESL Instructor
- Tennis, Traveling, Kayaking
- Volunteering
- Only Child
- Cat-Jasper
- Wyomissing, PA
Appendix B

Letter of Introduction

To whom it may concern,

May name is Mrs. Beck. I wanted to write to let you know a little bit about myself. I am 29 years old, and am from Wyomissing, PA. I am a ESL teacher, and have been for over five years now. In addition to teaching, I am also a Graduate student, a mother to my one year old daughter Sohee and a wife to my husband who is S. Korean. I do not have any sisters and brothers, but do have a cat named Jasper. In my free time, I enjoy kayaking, playing tennis, traveling with my family, and volunteering. I look forward to meeting and learning more about your in the future.

Sincerely,

Mrs. Beck
Appendix C

Peer Feedback Sheet

Name _______________________________

a. Did you partner use an appropriate greeting and closing? What were they?

____________________________________________________________________________

b. Did your partner include their Name, age, and place of origin?

____________________________________________________________________________

c. Does your partner state a purpose for writing?

____________________________________________________________________________

d. What topics did your partner write about?

____________________________________________________________________________

e. Does your partner write any sentences with and or but? Do they use them correctly?

____________________________________________________________________________

f. Does your partner use capitals and periods accurately? If not please insert them where needed.

____________________________________________________________________________

g. Write a short letter to your partner about something you liked regarding their letter of introduction. Write a question you have for them.

____________________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________________
Appendix D

Connecting sentences

Lesson 7  Connecting sentences

You can use and or but to connect sentences. Use a comma (,) before and and but in sentences like these:

To connect sentences with similar or additional information, use and.

I am Korean.  
My family lives in Seoul.  
I am Korean, and my family lives in Seoul.

To connect sentences with different or unexpected information, use but.

I am Korean.  
My family lives in Taipei.  
I am Korean, but my family lives in Taipei.

1. Read Carlita’s e-mail letter of introduction. Circle sentences to connect with and or but.

Hi Julie,

I will be your new roommate at Central Canadian College this fall, so let me tell you about myself. (I am Mexican.)

I live in the United States. I have traveled a lot. I have never been to Canada. I love math and science. I want to study biology in college. In my free time, I like listening to music. I like singing. Do you like music? What kind of music do you like? Please write back to me. Tell me something about yourself.

Best wishes,

Carlita

2. Connect the circled sentences from Exercise 1 with and or but. Write them here.

   a. I am Mexican, but I live in the United States.
   
   b. 
   
   c. 
   
   d. 
   
   e. 

3. Now look at the e-mail letter of introduction you wrote in Lesson 6. Can you connect any sentences?
Appendix E

Brainstorming Map

3. Now brainstorm the topic “Who am I?” Write your name in the circle. Then write as many words, phrases, and sentences as you can about yourself.

Who am I?

4. Use your information from Exercise 3 to introduce yourself to a classmate.

Hi, my name is .

I am .

Later in this unit .

You will write an e-mail letter of introduction.

You will also learn about topics to include in a letter of introduction.