Book Review/Lesson Plan

TESOL 550

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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 an 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 in 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 and 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 effectively. 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).

There are 5 lessons for every unit in the book and these lessons are designed to be developmental. 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 (e.g., writing about an ideal partner or a good friend) (Kelly & Gargagliano, 2004).
The lessons within the book center 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. Additionally, controlled and communicative activities are implemented to help students move through the various processes of writing as outlined in each unit. Finally, 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 the techniques mentioned above, 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 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 the 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 based 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.
References
