AANAPISI Project
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End of Semester Report

Due Date: August 16, 2013
(Please limit your report to no more than three pages.)

Title: Academic Writing Seminar for Graduate-Level English Learners in the College of Education: A Mixed Methods Study of Instructional Feedback and EL Student Writing

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Project Abstract: *(Same abstract from your cover page.)*

Background and Significance

The State of California has a particularly diverse demographic and linguistic composition, presenting both challenges and unique opportunities for teaching and learning in the state's public educational system (Aminy & Karathanos, 2011). Currently, more than 40% of California's K-12 students speak a primary language other than English (representing 56 different primary languages), and 25% of these students are classified as English learners (California Department of Education, 2009). Our universities are equally diverse. In the California State University (CSU) system, 50% of all students come from culturally and/or linguistically diverse backgrounds (CSU, 2007). Researchers estimate that 60% of students who enroll in the state's public universities are required to take remedial English courses. Two thirds of these students are English learners (ELs) (Scarcella, 2003).

Given the linguistic diversity and high percentage of ELs in our CSU system, it is logical that a number of students who enroll in professional preparation programs in the field of education in the CSU system are ELs who struggle with academic English. Because the CSU system does not currently include EL status in demographic information collected on students in The College of Education programs, it is difficult to estimate exactly how many English learners enroll in professional education programs overall in the state of California, and in particular, at San José State University (SJSU). However, based on a previous research project in which faculty in SJSU's Lurie College of Education were surveyed about the English learners they serve (Karathanos & Mena, 2009), we estimate that ELs comprise anywhere from 15%-25% of students enrolled in SJSU College of Education (COE) courses.

Serving these students is an increasingly important consideration for faculty at SJSU and other CSU's. Many of these educational professionals are teacher candidates who earn their credentials to work with an equally diverse K-12 student population, including many ELs. More specifically, when teacher candidates complete their credentials in California, they are certified with an EL authorization signifying their mastery of second-language acquisition principles and their ability to support the needs of EL students as well as promote academic language development in English among multilingual students. These teaching candidates will teach content specific or general writing skills to their students; they will be writing models for their students; and they will need to use academic writing in their preparation and professional work.

Research Questions

1. What are the demographic, educational, and linguistic backgrounds of EL graduate-level COE students enrolled in the AWS?
2. What are the academic writing histories (e.g. writing specific course, tests taken) and current academic writing struggles of these EL graduate students?
3. What are the EL students' levels of self-efficacy in academic writing?
4. What changes occur in EL students' writing skills as they participate in the AWS?
5. What teaching/feedback approaches do EL students find most beneficial in further developing their academic writing skills?

Project Goals:

Our project garners needed writing support for graduate EL students including Generation 1.5 students and under-represented minority students (URM) in our College of Education (COE). Additionally, the project addresses a paucity of research in the field on graduate-level EL writers in content-area classes. Our project will

1. provide writing support via a tuition free *Academic Writing Seminar* (AWS) to high need graduate-level COE students including URM students and English learners (*Generation 1.5 students*, recent immigrants, and international students) at SJSU .

2. identify student characteristics and needs and further develop curriculum for the AWS, a seminar for teachers and future education professionals in the COE.

3. explore effective approaches (strategies, resources, and models) for providing feedback to EL graduate-level COE students at SJSU. Researchers/Instructor will then share findings (via publication and presentation) with other SJSU faculty and the broader academic community.

Timeline

Spring 2013: In our pilot study, the researcher and instructor will collect data on student demographics, linguistic backgrounds, writing experiences, writing self-efficacy, current writing challenges, and preferred forms of feedback.

Summer 2013**:** The researcher and writing teacher will analyze the data from spring 2013, refine curriculum, and expand as needed on the research questions in preparation for fall 2013. They will also prepare a conference presentation for fall 2013 and eventual publication.

Fall 2013: The researcher and AWS instructor will continue into the evaluative phase of research. Our goals for this phase of the research are to outline effective strategies, resources, and models for providing feedback to graduate- level students in the COE and, in particular, ELs, and to revise curriculum based on the findings from spring 2013.

Did you achieve these goals? If not, please explain.

Yes. We are on target for achieving all of our project goals in the timeline specified above.

What were the outcomes and deliverables of your project?

Our outcomes and deliverables were in seven key areas. One, we provided writing support via a tuition free *Academic Writing Seminar* (AWS) to high need graduate-level COE students including URM students and English learners. Two, we collected the anticipated pilot study data. Three, we presented on the development of the AWS and on our initial analyses of the data at CATESOL in April of 2013. Four, we submitted a proposal that was approved by the curriculum committee for the course in the COE and received approval for continued funding until 2014. Five, we began analyzing data and feedback from students in the course this spring. Six, we have been using the initial data to inform curriculum improvements we are making for the fall 2013 semester. Seven, we submitted a proposal to present project findings at the National Association of Bilingual Education (NABE)

How did your project contribute to student success at SJSU? How many students did you reach?

In the Spring 2013, the AWS seminar enabled the students enrolled in the course to gain knowledge about academic writing conventions, to improve their understanding of their writing strengths and weaknesses, and to improve their editing skills. The presenting and information sharing we did in relation to the seminar increased awareness of the need to support EL graduate students in the COE and awareness of the AWS resource that will now be made available to students. Our work led to the course EDSC, *Advanced Writing Seminar for Professional Educators,* which will be offered in the fall 2013 and spring 2014 semesters. The curriculum committee has approved the course, and we hope to obtain funding for a tuition free course or approval for credit course beyond 2014. This course will help numerous COE students to improve their academic writing.

Twenty-six students expressed interest in joining the course in the Spring 2013; twelve were able to attend, and many others have expressed interest in the Fall 2013 session (including several who could not attend in the spring due to schedule conflicts).