

Catherine Hanus-Zank

ESL – Foreign Language Department, Wolfson Campus

Topic: Students' Awareness of Environmental Issues

Rationale:

The Department of English as a Second Language is currently undergoing the third and final stage of transitioning from its former curriculum (a mixture of college prep and academic) to its new curriculum (a completely academic one). The change is a result of new ESL competencies that are to be used statewide. All courses at all six levels are identified by an EAP prefix, which stands for English for academic Purposes. The emphasis is on preparing ESL students to matriculate into regular college classes.

This semester, one of the courses I am teaching is Level 5 Writing – EAP 1540. In Level 5 Writing, the emphasis has shifted from writing at the paragraph level to writing at the essay level. Furthermore, a new competency for this writing course is compiling a reading journal in which students first read an article and then write a reaction to it. I have always required my writing students to keep a journal; thus, the addition of a reading journal to the course requirements will provide an ideal way to begin to “green” the curriculum through appropriate readings.

Objective:

To increase students' awareness of environmental issues by means of selected readings and writing assignments.

To achieve this objective, I plan to do two activities. One is to have students use their journals to record their reactions to various readings. The other is to have students write on of their required essays on an environmental theme.

Procedure:

Activity #1: Reading/Writing Journal

1. Provide students with a variety of articles on the environment.
2. Discuss the format of a reaction paper.
3. Have students read the articles outside of class time.
4. Ask students to write their reactions to the articles in their writing/reading journals.
5. Collect the journals twice during the semester: midterm and near the end.

Activity #2: Essay

1. Provide students with an article appropriate for a comparison, cause and effect, or argumentation essay.
2. Have students read the article for homework.
3. Discuss vocabulary.
4. Brainstorm as a whole class.
5. Put students into groups of three to work cooperatively on the body of the essay.
6. Assign the introduction and the conclusion as homework.

Evaluation:*Activity #1: Reading/Writing Journal*

The students will receive a grade based on the successful completion of the assigned reading/writing task. They will document this by means of appropriate entries in their journals.

Activity #2: Essay

The students will be evaluated on both their participation as a member of a cooperative group and their individual effort on the essay. Each student will receive two grades for the targeted essay – one for the body (the group work) and another for the introduction and the conclusion (the individual work).