

Teaching for Transformational Learning in First-Year English

Dr. Heather Adams Osborn
University of Wisconsin – Whitewater, Department of Languages and Literatures

Introduction

The *Inside Higher Ed* article, “Creating a Friendlier Syllabus,” provides inspiration for syllabus and course changes that will be implemented in my first-year English courses for the 2022-23 academic year. The Learn Center Grant facilitates these course changes with the opportunity for more inclusive engagement and academic success for diverse learners. The areas of revision to my English courses and syllabi encompass four areas, including:

1. Revision of the Required Texts to the syllabus
2. Adding a section on Inclusive Learning practices
3. The addition of a Community Engagement component for relevant courses
4. The addition of a Health Concerns and Course Retention section.

Purpose

In regard to methodology, collection of data, and data analysis, this qualitative action research pilot study is made possible with a UWW LEARN Center Grant and is intended for continued research with UWW students, with IRB approval. A teaching journal of notes will be kept throughout the academic year on the four interventions. The results of the data will be analyzed using open coding. Results and Conclusions for this pilot study will be presented with other LEARN Center Grant recipients at the conclusion of the 2022-23 academic year and will be used as a foundation of research for further study.

Methods

The following interventions are planned for the syllabi in first-year English courses:

1. Revision of Required Texts:

→ **Texts We Use and Discover** will replace the Required Texts title, emphasizing that the selected text is a rental text of an older edition to save on costs for students.

→ **Materials will be supplemented with online links** to articles and readings for students to access in Canvas.

→ **Inclusive classroom pedagogy** will be emphasized using theories from Anyon (1980) and Milner (2017), stating that students will be given assignments where they choose the “texts” for discussion in class through articles, links, and multimodal texts on issues of interest for discussion and possible paper topics.

2. Adding Inclusive Learning Practices to Syllabi:

→ The use of Multimodalities for diverse learning styles:

- Employing short videos, documentaries, and film versions of texts for discussion and comparison to issues in readings.
- Students integrating visuals into writing assignments, research essays, and presentations.
- Including personal artwork, design, graphs, charts, and tables to relevant writing assignments (Whithaus & Bowen, 2013).

→ The use of Translingualism for multilingual speakers:

- Students are encouraged to include the use of other languages as relevant for writing assignments on personal and social issues.
- The use of alternative forms of English as relevant for writing assignments where students are encouraged to write in alternative styles, beyond a monolingual perspective, to demonstrate that we have more than “one” form of communicating. This is particularly important for English 90 students who are gaining confidence in expression (Mlynarczyk, 2014).

→ An emphasis on Multicultural and Inclusive Readings:

- Provide insights on varied voices and perspectives for learning to promote a sense of student identity, inclusion, and community (Milner, 2017), including topics on gender roles and identity, racism, sexism, cultural conflict and identity, LGBTQIA+ issues, autism and neurodiversity, being differently-abled, mental health issues, socio-economic differences, and issues of technology, communication skills, and community.

3. Community Engagement:

→ **Extra Credit option of 20 points** will be an added component to the courses, with extra credit given to students who can verify participating in community activities related to research and writing assignments in the course, including volunteerism, social justice activities, and publishing. This will encourage students to use their research for assignments in proactive ways beyond the classroom.

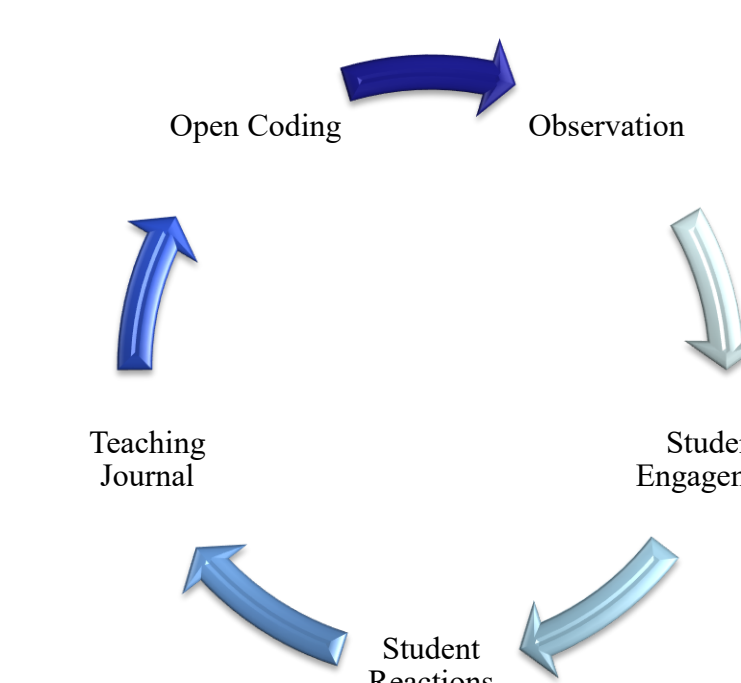
4. Health Concerns and Course Retention:

→ **Concerns for students' well-being addressed in syllabi**, due to the continued issues related to Covid and increasing concerns for the many issues that students must juggle, with issues at home, financial and work responsibilities, mental health issues, and divergent learning needs. A section addressing these issues in the syllabi will encourage students who feel overwhelmed to contact school administration and professors to discuss options, rather than simply disappearing from courses.

Data Analysis

This qualitative research study will use the data collection methods of observation, with data collected on student engagement with implemented learning strategies and practices and student reactions to the interventions integrated into the syllabi. Data will be recorded in a self-reflective teaching journal over the course of the semester to ensure validity and reliability.

The results of the data will be analyzed using open coding, looking for predominant themes and trends for interpreting the results and conclusions (Rossman & Rallis, 2017).



References

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