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Authentic Response:

A Case Study of ESL Students in a Non-Credit Community College

Reading and Writing Program

Proposal submitted by:

Betsy Kraft

To:
Human Subjects Research Review Committee
Office of Research and Sponsored Projects
Portland State University

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I. Prospectus

This research involves the implementation of eight reading and writing lessons for a non-credit English as a Second Language class, offered through Clackamas Community College; student evaluations of the texts and tasks that make up the lessons; and my observations of the students' interaction with the materials. The materials represent four different types of text commonly used in ESL classrooms. The purpose is to find out what types of texts and tasks students have an authentic response toward. An authentic response would be characterized by the students' indicating that the materials are interesting, useful, and contribute toward their language learning. The results of this study could inform the selection of materials and curriculum development of this course, and could be transferable to other courses in the program and similar programs.

The study will begin with a survey of the students, administered in their native language, to determine interests and perceived abilities, and the specific texts and tasks will be chosen according to their responses and the course objectives. See Appendix B for a sample survey. Students will use a different set of materials once a week for eight weeks. I will use a questionnaire, again administered in the students' native language, small-group interviews, and my field notes to look for evidence of authentic response. The small-group interviews will be tape-recorded. See Appendix C for a sample questionnaire and interview guide. In addition, I will look at two samples of writing to look for evidence of increased writing ability. Writing samples will be scored using Holistic Scoring of Writing, a standard assessment in this program. Finally, I will take field notes during class.

The research question is:

What types of texts and tasks elicit an authentic response from students in an upper-beginning reading and writing class designed for adult immigrants?

I hypothesize that all four types of texts and tasks have the potential to elicit an authentic response.

II. Exemption Claim for Waiver of Review

This study does not qualify for a waiver of review.

III. Participant Recruitment

Participants will be 12- 15 adult immigrants enrolled in the Upper-Beginning Reading and Writing class offered through Clackamas Community College's ESL, non-credit program in Canby. Presently, all the class members are originally from Mexico or Central America, and Spanish is their native language. Recruitment will take place the first night of classes. The participants will have varying amounts of schooling background, but they all will read and write at approximately the Upper-Beginning level, as determined by a placement test. Although the entire class will participate in the lessons, questionnaires, surveys, and writing exercises, I will analyze only the data collected from the class members who consent to the study.

Since this is a study of adults, any member of the class age 21 and over may participate in the study. Selection of participants will not be in any way harmful or discriminatory. Since the entire class will be using the materials and doing the activities, names will be on students papers. However, the names of the participants will be kept confidential, and will be replaced with a code number on all the surveys, questionnaires,

and writing samples that become part of the study. No names will be used in my field notes.

IV. Informed Consent

Consent forms will be given to students enrolled in the class on the first night of classes. They will be provided with an explanation of the research project, written in their native language. A separate consent form, written in English, will be prepared for the teacher, since my field notes may contain her observations and opinions. The Assistant Administrator for Research at Clackamas Community College has indicated that the college has no additional requirement for consent, and Glenda Tepper, Associate Dean of Student Services, responsible for student and enrollment services, met with me to confirm that this proposal meets the requirements for the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act. See Appendix A for the informed consent forms.

V. First-Person Scenario

“Tonight, my teacher made sure that all the new people met Betsy. Those of us who were in this class last term already knew her because she helped in our class. Our teacher explained to us that Betsy wants to do a research project in our class. She wants to find out how we interact with four different types of reading materials and tasks. We always read and write on the nights that we aren’t using the computers, but this term, we are using some materials that we’ve never used before. Our lessons will be like they always are: our teacher will introduce the reading, then we’ll work in pairs or small groups to read and do the tasks. After that, we will discuss our work as a whole class. Betsy will be making notes about the things we say. During the last ten minutes of class, we will fill out a questionnaire asking us our opinions of the text and tasks. The questionnaire will be in our native language. After four weeks, Betsy will meet with whomever was in class all four times, and she will ask us questions about the four sets of materials. She will do the same thing after the second four weeks. She wants to tape-record those interviews, but only if we say she can. She is also going to look at two of our papers that we write in class to see if our writing is improving.

We don’t have to be part of the study if we don’t want to, and it’s okay to change our mind at any time. We will still do the same activities if we don’t participate, but Betsy won’t use our papers or write anything down that we say. It is okay with our teacher if we decide not to participate. When Betsy collects the papers from those of us who decide to participate, she will cut our names off and replace them with a code number. She said she’ll have a sheet that keeps track of our first names and code numbers, but she will keep it confidential.

The next time I saw Betsy was a Wednesday evening. Our teacher introduced the lesson, and then we all read and did the tasks. Betsy was like a teacher’s helper. We were already used to that because she came to our class last quarter on Wednesday evenings. After we finished reading and doing the task, we all discussed what we had done. Betsy was taking notes. Then, during the last ten minutes of class, we all filled out a questionnaire about the materials we used in our lesson. I was really glad the questionnaire was in Spanish. There is a lady in our class from Korea, and she said that her questionnaire was in Korean.

Everything was the same the next Wednesday, except we used different materials.

But something different happened the fourth week of the project. Everybody who had done all four lessons met together, and Betsy asked us questions about our opinions of the materials. She asked us if she could tape us, and we said that was fine. She explained that she would get all of our input more accurately that way. The same thing happened after eight weeks, only this time we talked about the 5th through 8th sets of materials.

During the quarter, we wrote two papers, but we do that every quarter. Betsy looked at our papers and wrote down whether or not our writing improved.”

V. Potential Risks and Safeguards

The only identifiable potential risk would be the exposure of the students’ name, gender, age group, schooling background, writing scores, and personal opinions. Students’ names could be associated with their survey, questionnaire, interview, and writing samples, and their writing samples could be exposed to someone outside the program staff. I will remove students’ names from the surveys and questionnaires, and assign them a code number. I will record writing scores using the code number; the teacher will keep the writing samples as per regular assessment practices. I will ask for demographic information on the initial survey and record it using the code number in place of the participants’ name.

VI. Potential Benefits

The students’ reading and writing may benefit from the attention that will be focused on the materials selected for their class. They may have an increased sense of esteem from the opportunity to voice their opinions regarding the materials they find interesting and useful. The results of the study may inform the future selection of materials for this class and other classes in the program. Most studies on authenticity are on the authenticity of materials, not the students’ response to the materials, and most of them are conducted in for-credit language classes or university sponsored intensive English classes. This study has the potential of adding data to the ongoing discussion in the field of Applied Linguistics.

VIII. Records and Distribution

Subject confidentiality will be maintained by the use of code numbers in data collected and the dissemination of the data and research. Only the teacher, researcher, and program personnel will have access to the names and demographic information of the students in the class. The researcher will return the writing samples to the teacher after coding them and recording the writing scores. All data and records, including taped interview sessions, will be kept on file at the researcher’s home, in a file cabinet, for a minimum of three years after the completion of the research, per federal regulatory requirements.

APPENDIX A

Informed Consent Forms

Student Consent Form

My name is Betsy Kraft. I am a graduate student in Applied Linguistics at Portland State University. I will be working in your class this quarter.

I am inviting you to participate in a research project that I am doing as part of my university requirements. I will be asking you your opinions about the things you read and the tasks you do in your class. I hope to find out what kinds of materials you find interesting and useful, and if you think they help you become better at writing and reading in English. I will not be using your name in the study.

What will I have to do?

If you decide to take part in this project, you:

- will fill out a survey about your interests and what you think you can read and write in English. The survey will also ask you your gender, age group, and how much previous schooling you have had. You will fill out the survey again at the end of the quarter.
- will complete a questionnaire about your opinions of what you read in class, and the tasks you did. The questionnaire will be in your native language. You will fill one out after every lesson (8 lessons).
- may be interviewed, as part of a small group, about your opinions of the materials
- may be tape-recorded during the interview, if you give me permission.
- let me look at your writing papers and write down your scores

Why have I been asked to participate?

- Everyone over age 21 who is enrolled in this class is invited to participate. It is the age group and level I am interested in studying.
- You do not have to participate. Everyone will still do all the activities. I will only use the information from the people who agree to participate.
- It is all right with your teacher if you decide not to participate, and it will not affect the way she teaches you.

Are there any risks?

There is a small risk someone will figure out your name, but I will remove it from the information you give me and replace it with a code number. I will keep the list of names and code numbers confidential. Your teacher will also keep any information confidential.

What are you doing to protect me?

- Your privacy is very important to me. I will remove your name and refer to the information you give me by code number only.
- I will not use your name if you are part of a tape-recorded interview.

- The law requires me to keep any information I get from you in a locked drawer.
- I will need to know your name to keep track of who is participating, but I will keep that information in a locked drawer or in a locked file on the computer so that only I can look at it.
- Your name will not appear in the paper I write at the end of the project.
- You will receive a copy of this consent form for your records.

What is the benefit to me if I participate in this project?

- You will have a chance to say your opinion.
- Your opinions may influence the things this class reads and the activities this class does in the future.
- You will be contributing important information to the people who plan classes like this one.

What happens if I decide not to participate in the study?

You do not have to participate. You may still do all the activities. When the class fills out the questionnaires and surveys, you will not have to do it if you don't want to, but you can if you do want to. I just won't include your information in my study.

It will not change the way your teacher teaches you.

You may change your mind about participating at any time.

Any Questions?

You may call me if you have any questions:

Betsy Kraft
503-725-9198

Or, you may contact the Chair of the Human Subjects Committee of Portland State University about your rights as a research participant:

Portland State University
Cramer Hall, Room 11
1721 Broadway Ave.
Portland, Or 97201
Telephone: 503-725-8182; email: hsrrc@lists.pdx.edu

If I sign what does it mean?

This is a consent form. Your signature means that you read this form.

- If you check the box marked "Yes, I want to participate", it means that you have read and understand this form and you want to participate.
- If you check the box marked "No, I do not want to participate", then I will not use anything you do in class in my project.

signature

Date

YES, I want to participate

NO, I do not want to participate

Instructor Consent

Authentic Response:
A Case Study of ESL Students in a Non-Credit Community College
Reading and Writing Program

Informed Consent

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Betsy Kraft from Portland State University Department of Applied Linguistics. This study is being conducted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a master's degree, and is under the supervision of Dr. Brian Lynch, faculty member. The researcher hopes to learn what types of texts and tasks students have an authentic response toward. An authentic response would be characterized by the students' indicating that the materials are interesting, useful, and contribute toward their language learning. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because you are an instructor of the population and the course being studied.

If you decide to participate, you will be asked to:

- Work with the researcher in selecting and preparing appropriate lessons
- Present the study and consent forms to the students in Spanish
- Administer a survey of needs and interests to the participants in Spanish
- Teach the lessons
- Give the student-participants an opportunity to complete the questionnaire that accompanies each lesson
- Allow the researcher to come to your class as a participant observer
- Allow the student-participants to meet and talk with the researcher about the texts and tasks
- Provide your own observations and opinions to the researcher
- Collect two writing samples from each student-participant for the researcher to examine for evidence of increased writing ability

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be linked to you or identify you will be kept confidential. This information will be kept confidential in the written report by referring to you only as the instructor, and neither the community college nor the program site will be referred to by name. Information collected from you and your students will be kept in a locked drawer or in a locked file on the computer. .

Your participation is voluntary. You do not have to take part in this study, and you may withdraw from this study at any time without affecting your relationship with the researcher or Portland State University.

If you have concerns or problems about your participation in this study or your rights as a research subject, please contact the Human Subjects Research Review Committee, Office of Research and Sponsored Projects, 111 Cramer Hall, Portland State University, (503) 725-8182. If you have questions about the study itself, contact:

Betsy Kraft
P.O. Box 394
Aurora, OR 97002
(503) 651-3663
kraft@canby.com

Your signature indicates that you have read and understand the above information and agree to take part in this study. Please understand that you may withdraw your consent at any time without penalty, and that, by signing, you are not waiving any legal claims, rights or remedies. You will receive a copy of this form for your records.

Signature

Date

APPENDIX B

Name _____

Male

Female

Age Group: 21-30 31-40 40 or over

What was the last grade level you completed in school? _____

Student Survey of Interests

Check (✓) the topics that you want to read about in class.

World events

Stories about famous people

Stories about ordinary people

Stories about immigrants

Stories about nature

Stories about animals

Stories about Oregon history

Stories about American History

Native American myths

Stories related to American culture

Places to visit

Local events

Interesting facts

Sports

Mysteries

Adventures

Information about local services

Information in the newspaper

Other Ideas:

Student Survey of Abilities and Needs

What do you believe you can do in English?

1. I can find what I need or want in:

- | | | | |
|---------------------|-------|-----------|---------|
| a. an advertisement | never | sometimes | usually |
| b. a brochure | never | sometimes | usually |
| c. a catalogue | never | sometimes | usually |

- | | | | |
|----------------|-------|-----------|---------|
| d. a newspaper | never | sometimes | usually |
| e. a magazine | never | sometimes | usually |

2. Check (✓) the items above that are important for you to do in English.

3. I can read these in English:

- | | | | |
|------------------------------|-------|-----------|---------|
| a. an advertisement | never | sometimes | usually |
| b. a note | never | sometimes | usually |
| c. a telephone message | never | sometimes | usually |
| d. directions | never | sometimes | usually |
| e. a paragraph | never | sometimes | usually |
| f. a letter | never | sometimes | usually |
| g. a short story | never | sometimes | usually |
| h. an article in a newspaper | never | sometimes | usually |
| i. an article in a magazine | never | sometimes | usually |

4. Check (✓) the items above that are important for you to read in English.

5. I can **write** these in English:

- | | | | |
|-------------------------------|-------|-----------|---------|
| a. an advertisement | never | sometimes | usually |
| b. a note | never | sometimes | usually |
| c. a telephone message | never | sometimes | usually |
| d. directions | never | sometimes | usually |
| e. a paragraph | never | sometimes | usually |
| f. a letter | never | sometimes | usually |
| g. a 1-page story | never | sometimes | usually |
| h. a story longer than 1 page | never | sometimes | usually |

6. Check (✓) the items above that are important for you to write in English.

APPENDIX C

Student Questionnaire

Name _____

Date _____ Title of Reading Selection _____

Each reading selection is from a group. This selection is:

Group 1: from a newspaper/magazine/web site/brochure/etc.

Group 2: an original text

Group 3: from an ESL text

Group 4: from English speaking children's literature

Please read each statement and circle how true YOU think each statement is.

1. I want to read more selections from this group.
strongly disagree disagree neutral agree strongly agree
2. I understood what I read today.
strongly disagree disagree neutral agree strongly agree
3. I want to know more about this topic.
strongly disagree disagree neutral agree strongly agree
4. I enjoyed reading this.
strongly disagree disagree neutral agree strongly agree
5. This reading selection was interesting.
strongly disagree disagree neutral agree strongly agree
6. When I read today, I felt encouraged that my reading is improving.
strongly disagree disagree neutral agree strongly agree
7. This reading selection stimulated my feelings.
strongly disagree disagree neutral agree strongly agree
8. I found out information I can use.
strongly disagree disagree neutral agree strongly agree
9. I found out something I wanted to know.
strongly disagree disagree neutral agree strongly agree
10. This reading selection helped me improve my ability to read in English.
strongly disagree disagree neutral agree strongly agree
11. I think the main purpose of this reading selection was
 To give information
 To entertain
 To teach about language
12. The task helped me understand the reading.
strongly disagree disagree neutral agree strongly agree

13. The task helped me write better.	strongly disagree	disagree	neutral	agree	strongly agree
14. I learned something I can use from the task.	strongly disagree	disagree	neutral	agree	strongly agree
15. I understood the task.	strongly disagree	disagree	neutral	agree	strongly agree
16. The task was an interesting process.	strongly disagree	disagree	neutral	agree	strongly agree
17. The task was challenging, but I could do it.	strongly disagree	disagree	neutral	agree	strongly agree
18. I enjoyed doing the task.	strongly disagree	disagree	neutral	agree	strongly agree
19. I feel motivated when I understand something.	strongly disagree	disagree	neutral	agree	strongly agree
20. This lesson should be included in this reading and writing class.	strongly disagree	disagree	neutral	agree	strongly agree

Interview Guidelines

Materials Discussed:

- a.
- b.
- c.
- d.

How many participants? _____ Date _____

1. (Display set a) Did you like these materials? Why/Why not?

2. Too easy/too hard?

3. Interesting/boring?

4. Good selection for this class/different class? Why/why not?

5. (Display set b) Did you like these materials? Why/Why not?

6. Too easy/too hard?

7. Interesting/boring?

8. Good selection for this class/different class? Why/why not?

9. (Display set c) Did you like these materials? Why/Why not?

10. Too easy/too hard?

11. Interesting/boring?

12. Good selection for this class/different class? Why/why not?

13. (Display set d) Did you like these materials? Why/Why not?

14. Too easy/too hard?

15. Interesting/boring?

16. Good selection for this class/different class? Why/why not?

17. Compare and contrast sets a and b. How are they similar? How are they different?

18. Did you like one set better? Why?

19. Compare and contrast sets a and c. How are they similar? How are they different?

20. Did you like one set better? Why?

21. Compare and contrast sets a and d. How are they similar? How are they different?

22. Did you like one set better? Why?

23. Compare and contrast sets b and c. How are they similar? How are they different?

24. Did you like one set better? Why?

25. Compare and contrast sets b and d. How are they similar? How are they different?

26. Did you like one set better? Why?