

### **Description of the Learning Context**

I chose to integrate my five corpus based lessons with Colorado State University's Composition and Rhetoric 150 International sections (CO150I). As a T.A. for two CO150I classes during the Spring 2013 semester, I feel I have a good idea of the needs of the students and the expectations of the class, which helped guide my decisions for my activities. I was also guided by written corrective feedback studies by Ferris (2002), integration of corpora into the classroom views from Flowerdew (2009), and a case study on writing in higher education by Abasi, Akbari, and Graves (2006). In addition, I used unpublished online sources (Kent State University, 2013; Weber, R. & Stolley, K., n.d.; Whitaker, A., 2009; Writing Center, CSU, n.d.) to support the rationale for these lessons because these unpublished websites reflect American 'standard' values of writing that students must contend with in the U.S. university context.

This international section of basic English composition and rhetoric is tailored for international students in that the assignments are the same as mainstream CO150, but the rhetoric of American academic English is more explicit, as are the expected conventions for this type of writing. CO150 classes are required for all CSU undergraduates, and nonnative English speakers may opt to take a CO150I section. CO150 is a three credit course. Students are expected to complete five major essays throughout the semester-long course, and to express complex ideas and conventions clearly in English. This class is a foundation writing class that students need to be successful in other classes. CO150 follows the hierarchy of rhetorical concerns, which designates priorities in writing to be, in order of most to least important: purpose, audience, content, focus, development, organization, style, conventions (Writing Center). The curriculum objectives from the CO150I syllabus are as follows:

*At the end of the semester, students who earn a passing grade will be able to:*

1. Engage in critical reading and identify rhetorical elements of texts.
2. Identify writing goals appropriate for specified rhetorical contexts.
3. Identify and complete appropriate writing tasks from generating ideas to editing a final draft.
4. Locate and evaluate pertinent source material, including library and Internet-based sources.
5. Draft texts for specified rhetorical contexts.
6. Understand the principles of revising and editing.
7. Be able to revise for focus, structure, style, purpose, and audience.
8. Evaluate and act on revision suggestions from your peers and teacher.

The CO150I curriculum objectives that I think corpus-based activities could serve to enhance student learning are numbers 3, 4, 6, 7 and 8. All of these focus on understanding available resources and editing drafts other than the first so that the hierarchy of rhetorical concerns and emphasis on content over grammar is being followed.

Classes of CO150I are all international students, with an average class size of 18-24. Though some students are generation 1.5, the majority have not lived in the United States for more than one year before taking the course. They have either taken the course directly from their home country or completed CO130, the most basic English composition course offered within CSU's main campus. However, they all have passed the required English proficiency exam allowing them to attend regular classes at CSU, and are therefore considered highly proficient. The students' most common first languages are Arabic and Chinese. Their

experience with technology varies depending on whether they grew up in an urban or rural home area, but all mainstream CSU assignments must be typed, so they therefore have basic computer skills.

Overall, the students of CO150I are diverse. However, they can be characterized (from my and other teachers' personal experience), generally, as being highly motivated to succeed and needing a tremendous amount of individual help. Because of this, corpus based activities that employ Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) can be highly appropriate for this population of students.

## References

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