

Classroom Based Research

Differentiated instruction; teaching writing thesis statements in collage level composition classroom

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Why differentiated instruction?

Diversity

- culture,
- language,
- educational purposes,
- age,
- lifestyles...etc.,

One of the most diverse classrooms is freshmen composition classrooms; being able to reach the same goals in this kind of class requires effective instructional strategies to assess and meet all kinds of students' needs.

- One of the main goals of the course is helping students to write effective thesis statements so that they can become better writers.

What is thesis statement?

- A thesis statement is a sentence (or sentences) that expresses the main ideas of your paper and answers the question or questions posed by your paper. (Erin Karper, August 2002)

Thesis statement should reflect;

- What you are going to talk about
- Your point of view
- The order in which you present your points

So these are the criteria that I used to analyze my students' thesis statements.

Purpose of my study,

This research aims to find out the effects of differentiated instruction on learning how to write thesis statements in freshmen composition class.

My objectives for this project are the following:

- Examine the positive effects of differentiated instruction in a freshmen composition classroom.
- Assess student thesis statement writing ability with different strategies.
- Help students to become aware of their academic needs.

What is differentiated instruction?

- A key goal of differentiated instruction is maximizing the learning potential of each student (Tomlinson, 2001, 2003)

- Students' attitudes about learning and about themselves as learners are important in establishing, maintaining, and developing students' commitment to the learning process. (Tomlinson,2003)

There is no single “recipe” for differentiation. (Tomlinson, 2005)

My recipe is:

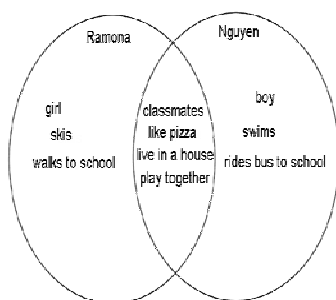
- Reflective journals on students own thesis statement writing process,
- Peer reviews commenting on other students' product
- Graphic organizers

Reflective Journals

- To promote students awareness of their academic needs in freshmen writing course, reflective journals on their own thesis statement writing process is very effective for students; because with the help of reflective journals students both practice writing, and reflect their attitudes towards learning and themselves as a learner.
- For reflective journals I used www.livejournal.com. All of my students have their own private accounts.

Self-Peer Assessment

The purpose of self and peer assessment in my class is to make students aware of their process of learning as well as their peers. With the help of peer assessments they renew their learning and help other students. For self and peer assessment of thesis statements, I used handouts from <http://www.edb.utexas.edu/pbl/ESOL/thesis.htm> and I believe the handouts are very practical and effective for in class activities. They have proper questions and criteria which students should check to have good thesis statements.



<http://www.graphic.org>

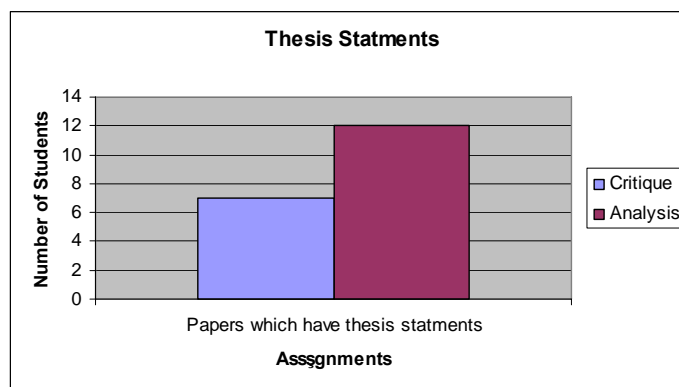
Graphic Organizers

Mind Maps and Concept Maps are pictorial or graphical ways to organize information and thoughts for understanding, remembering, or writing about. Graphic organizers, mind maps and concept maps are powerful tools that can be used to enhance learning and create a foundation for learning. (www.graphic.org)

The reason why I used graphic organizer is I want my students see the structure or general organization of their thoughts so that they can come up with a working thesis statement which include what they are going to talk about in their paper, what is their point of view and the order which they present their ideas or important points. I think seeing the picture of their thoughts help them to write thesis statements.

Conclusion

The statistics show that the students who have proper thesis statements in their assignments increased after differentiated instruction. Most of the freshmen composition students come to class without knowing what the thesis statement is and how it is used in an academic paper, so as a result of my study I find that differentiated instruction help students to better understand the function and the basic principles of thesis statement in an academic paper. Teaching writing better thesis statements is one of the objectives of my composition course and I reached my goal successfully using differentiated instruction. However, the quality of thesis statements need further practice.



Sample Thesis Statements

Before

Topic: *Movies are popular all over the world. Explain why movies are so popular. Use reasons and specific examples to support your answer.*

Movies are popular all over the world because they provide entertainment, they are visual and they are money making.

Because people do not prefer reading books, movies are very popular in our days.

Movies, have a big success all over the world because it's an entertainment for the public, generally representing our lives, making us dreaming, afraid us or let us perplex.

After

Topic: *Analyze the movie "Bend it Like Beckham" whether it is influenced by Hollywood movies or not, if it is what are the components that make it influenced by Hollywood?*

.....Although the movie is British being directed by an Indian woman; the use of hero character, plot reflecting happy ending, western influence, humorous moments, a major American sport and individualistic life shown in this movie is based on the typical Hollywood movies.

.....Even though this movie is about Indian culture it hardly follows “Bollywood” movie styles. Instead it follows the most famous “Hollywood” movie style. Hollywood has influenced the theme, plot and characters of the movie “Bend it like Beckham”.

.....The movie circles around many prominent features that are influenced by Hollywood like story about a teenager, independent culture, motivation behind a goal, difficulties in achieving the goal and success at the end of the movie.

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<http://www.edb.utexas.edu/pbl/ESOL/thesis.htm>

<http://www.uvsc.edu/owl/handouts/revised%20handouts/content%20and%20organization/thesis%20statements.pdf>

<http://www.graphic.org>

Useful Links

<http://english.ttu.edu/kairos/3.1/news/paradigm/thesfrms.htm>

<http://www.wisc.edu/writing/Handbook/Thesis.html>

[http://www.eduref.org/cgi-](http://www.eduref.org/cgi-bin/printlessons.cgi/Virtual/Lessons/Language_Arts/Debate/DEB0201.html)

[bin/printlessons.cgi/Virtual/Lessons/Language_Arts/Debate/DEB0201.html](http://www.eduref.org/cgi-bin/printlessons.cgi/Virtual/Lessons/Language_Arts/Debate/DEB0201.html)

<http://www.smccd.edu/accounts/colombetti/SLO.htm>

Academic Writing: Developing a Thesis Statement (available at

<http://www.wisc.edu/writing/Handbook/thesis.html>)

Thesis writing (available at <http://www.rpi.edu/web/writingcenter/thesis.html>)

The Thesis Statement (<http://webster.commnet.edu/grammar/composition/thesis.htm>) How to

Write a Thesis Statement (<http://www.indiana.edu/~wts/wts/thesis.html>) LEO Thesis

Statement (<http://leo.stcloudstate.edu/acadwrite/thesistatement.html>)