

Chapter 65

They Can't Fix What They Can't Hear: Improving Pre-Service Teachers' Spoken Grammar

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ABSTRACT

The Grammar Case touches on aspects of instructional design that go beyond scope and sequence of content, including: 1) communicating with a client, 2) representing a learning problem from the perspectives of different learning theories and human performance improvement, 3) working with institutional stake holders, and 4) considering non-instructional as well as instructional interventions. The instructional designers in the case must address a sensitive learning problem with limited financial resources and an institutional culture that may be resistant to change. The case depends, more than anything, on problem finding. A key instructional technology issue in the case is how the designers can ethically and feasibly use video recorded in public school classrooms to assess student teachers' grammar mistakes and also as stimulus material for instruction.

ORGANIZATION BACKGROUND

State University is a medium-sized public university in the Midwest (U.S.). The key organizational units are the Teacher Education Program (TEP) that prepares K-12 teachers and the graduate program in Instructional Design and Technology (IDT). The TEP is a four-semester program that students complete in their junior and senior years. More than half of the students enter the TEP after

completing two years of coursework at one of the numerous community colleges in the state. The TEP consists of three semesters on campus and a semester of student teaching. At the conclusion of their student teaching experience, TEP students make a capstone presentation to faculty members. They use their electronic portfolio to describe and display standards-based instructional activities and student assessments that they completed during their student teaching. They also reflect upon their

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emerging vision as professional teachers. Some TEP candidate portfolios include video recordings of their classroom teaching, but classroom video is not required.

Both the TEP program and the IDT program are housed in the College of Education. The TEP program is the major undergraduate focus of the college. The IDT program, in contrast, is strictly graduate level and attracts masters and doctoral students from many countries. The masters degree in IDT includes a semester-long internal internship working in a not-for-profit instructional design firm that is run by the IDT program.

SETTING THE STAGE

Huong Thi Lien came from Vietnam as a Fulbright scholar. She earned an undergraduate degree in English as a Second Language (ESL) and is now completing a masters degree in IDT. Jamil Stevens is an African-American student from Chicago who earned an undergraduate degree in Workforce Education and is now completing a masters degree in IDT. Lien and Jamil serve as instructional designers for Human Performance and Learning Consultants (HPLC), the not-for-profit instructional design firm that is run by the IDT program. The HPLC faculty advisor is Dr. Bill Kuper, who directed the training department of a large corporation for 20 years before becoming a faculty member in IDT. Dr. Kuper has assigned Lien and Jamil to an instructional project for Dr. Marlene Jensen, dean of the College of Education. Dr. Jensen recently took the dean position and came to the university, which is in a rural setting, from a large metropolitan area.

CASE DESCRIPTION

Dr. Kuper meets with Lien and Jamil before they hold an initial meeting with their client. Dr. Kuper emphasizes the *problem finding* goals of

the initial client meeting and advises Lien and Jamil to avoid the temptation to start proposing solutions or creating content right away. Rather, they need to listen carefully and “interrogate” the problem. Dr. Kuper suggests that they draw on their personal experiences and their undergraduate studies, Lien’s ESL background and Jamil’s workforce education background that included Human Performance Improvement (Richey et al., 2011). Dr. Kuper also suggests that they draw on learning theories to see how the problem would be framed differently from the perspectives of behavioral, cognitive, and situated learning theories (Driscoll, 2012). He stresses the need for *finding* the problem before trying to solve it (Stepich & Ertmer, 2009). “Understand the client, the learners, and the context. Then find opportunities that fit.”

When Lien and Jamil conduct their initial client meeting with Dr. Jensen, she describes her concerns: One of the first things that she did as the new College of Education dean was to attend several of the capstone presentations given by teacher education candidates who were just completing their student teaching experience. The teacher candidates were often nervous during their capstone presentations but were also enthusiastic about their development as classroom teachers. The students presented electronic portfolios of their student teaching activities. The problem was that some of these students, who were just weeks from graduating and taking teaching jobs, made spoken grammar mistakes in their capstone presentations. The dean said that each grammar miscue sounded like “fingernails on a chalkboard.” As proud as she and the TEP faculty were of these teacher candidates, she was concerned about sending them into classrooms where they might perpetuate verbal language issues with a new generation of students. Indeed, some of the teacher candidates with noticeable verbal language issues came from rural and inner-city schools and were dedicated to teaching in the types of schools that they came from.

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