



Literature

Elixir Literature 72 (2014) 25445-25446

Elixir
ISSN: 2229-712X

Incorporating students' majors, social and personal needs into assignments

Sarantuya Sangijantsan and Ariunaa Gunsentsoodol

Foreign Language Department, School of Mechanical Engineering, MUST, Mongolia.

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received: 29 May 2014;

Received in revised form:

19 June 2014;

Accepted: 2 July 2014;

Keywords

Independent assignment,
Knowledge,
Examination method,
Evaluation method.

ABSTRACT

Well-designed course assignments are a critical component of effective teaching and learning processes. It is our responsibility to create an assignment that is reflective of the course goal. Course assignments are created to measure the extent of our student's knowledge. Therefore, based on our experience and knowledge, we have written below how at Mongolian University of Science and Technology the Professional English course's assignments should be created and carried out.

© 2014 Elixir All rights reserved

Introduction

Ever since MUST implemented credit system, course assignments have become an important part of our grading. Besides the knowledge received in a classroom, assignments give students an opportunity to gain more knowledge, acquire and practice the skills that are required for the future job. Our assignments will be focused on improving students' analytical and problem solving skills. Some teachers tend to overlook the importance course assignments. Designing a course assignment that lacks clarity, and consideration reduces the effectiveness of the course and could lead to wrong evaluation of students' academic performances.

The objective of the paper is to discuss the importance of well designed course assignments to our teaching and the quality of the education that we provide to our students. Well designed course assignments must be in line with the overall course objective and intellectually stimulating for students. Great way to catch students' interest is to design an assignment that is related to their major such as the type of work that they will be required to do on a real job. Therefore, the aim of the Professional English course assignment is to provide a knowledge that is useful in real life situation for our students and help them become skilled professionals.

Organizing the assignment

In order to improve the quality and the impact of the course assignments, teachers shall set clear and specific instructions and most importantly provide all necessary information to students. Although, clear assignment instructions are given, it is important to set a side a time for students to ask questions about the assignment and clarify their understanding. With clarification, instead of losing time being confused, students can start working on the assignment right away and be efficient. Our goal is to provide instructions that are as clear as possible. This includes specific details on what the assignment is about, how it should be done, sources that can be used, how the assignment is going to be graded, when the deadline is, and whom it should be submitted to. Please refer to below table for course assignment syllabus.

Above table represents the types of assignments that will be required. The types of assignments are made to improve students' english language skills such as reading, writing, speaking, and translating as well as team working skills.

Starting from 2006, we have taught foreign language grammar, speaking, writing, reading, and listening separately. We have noticed that this method helps develop all skills equally and increases students' practice and participation in classroom. Also, this method helps each teacher to focus on one language skill and improve their teaching techniques to be more efficient and effective.

As noted above, the Professional English course assignments include topics that could be very useful for the student, such as, translating major related articles using dictionary and explain what was understood. Although, assignments like such focus on improving student's reading and translating skills, teachers may ask questions to check whether the student fully understood the article.

Besides working on improving our students' speaking and writing skills, we also teach them how to create a CV, write a cover letter, give presentation, give a job interview, do career research, and advertising new products and services. We cover these topics in detail during class and students tend to be more interested and do well on the assignments. We have received many positive feedbacks from graduates that these assignments were very useful for them to create CVs, cover letters and other documents on their own to apply for jobs. The objective of such assignments is to prepare our students for their future careers by teaching the how to present themselves professionally. Having such skills will benefit not only the student but the future employer as well.

Evaluation methods for assignments

For written assignments we receive the draft paper by online first. Then we read them, correct any mistakes, and write suggestions and send it back to the student. This way student can have a chance to correct any mistakes and improve the final version of the paper. By giving out students a second chance to improve their work, improves their grade and helps them learn from their mistake. Since improving their grades boosts their

self confidence, we have noticed that the students tend to complete the assignment on time. We believe that any work done by the student deserves to be graded. Therefore, even if the assignment is late we try to give the students appropriate grade and encourage them to submit future assignments on time.

The next type of assignment requires a teamwork. For example: The 3rd assignment requires a team of 4 to 5 members. 2 members will pretend to be the interviewers of a company and 3 members will pretend to be interviewees and conduct a job interview. Then the teacher asks the interviewers which one of the 3 candidates most suits the open position at the company. This type of assignment improves the students' decision making and problem solving skills. The 9th assignment is also great for group projects. From our experience, most student will discuss about the advantages and disadvantages of cell phone operators such as Mobicom, Unitel, and Skytel or the new Pepsi and Coca Cola advertising campaigns. Individual students can also give presentation about a product or a service and the rest of the class can ask questions of debate. Male students are likely to talk about the advantages of new technological finds and gadgets such as iPhone and female students usually talk about beauty products. We like to promote working in teams as much as possible to our students. We believe that it teaches our students to learn, listen and respect each other. This type of assignments are graded based on other student's vote. The students who did not do well can hear what they have done wrong and how to improve themselves from fellow students rather than the teacher so they don't feel criticized. To make group assignment effective, it is extremely important for teachers to form equal groups, select the team leaders, and give clear instructions.

We have created and graded course assignments for many years. Over the years we have noticed some improvements and down sides. Although, translating assignments help students to learn professional language and improve their vocabulary, it is only helpful to those students who complete the assignment on their own. The down side of translation assignment is that it gives student an opportunity to copy someone else's work without getting caught. We cannot question student's academic integrity without any hard evidence. In order to prevent this, we always assign individual sections to each student. It has helped us identify weak students and help them improve their translating skills. Quality of the translation has not improved significantly due to the fact that there are no good quality technical dictionaries available. Besides written, group, and

translating assignments, teachers also provide reading assignments, quizzes, and tests to constantly check students' knowledge and keep track of improvements.

We cooperate with other teachers with presentation assignments. For example: we work with Ts. Gantumur who teaches Logistics and Transport Management course at our university. Based on the case studies that the students worked on during technical courses students can pick a topic and prepare a Power Point presentation in English. Teachers always give tips on how to give a presentation to student prior to the assignment. The presentation is graded based on the vocabulary, pronunciation, body language, answers to questions asked, execution of the Power Point presentation and its relation to the topic. Since the grade is based on many qualities, student with poor speaking skill could earn a good grade if he/she did well on other parts. It encourages students to try their hardest because everything that they do could count towards a better grade. Only the irresponsible students tend to get bad grades on this assignment.

Assignment outcomes

It is concluded that by completing Professional English course assignments, our students have obtained skills and knowledge that are critical to start their professional careers. After taking this course, students will not only be able to have conversations using professional vocabulary but also have an understanding of typical business structure and be able to work with business documents. With the skills and knowledge that the students gain at our school, they will meet any employers requirements and expectations.

Bibliography:

1. Graham Tullis & Tonya Trappe, *New Insights into Business*, Pearson Education Ltd.; 2 edition, 2004
2. Jeremy Comfort, *Effective Presentations* Oxford University Press, USA; 1st Edition edition, 1996
3. Eric H. Glendinning & Norman Glendinning, *Electrical and Mechanical Engineering* Oxford University Press, USA, 1995

About the authors

S. Sarantuya is the head of the Department of Foreign Language at the School of Mechanical Engineering. She has taught English for 21 years.

G. Ariunaa is a foreign language teacher at the School of Mechanical Engineering. She has been an English teacher since 1992.