ABSTRACT

RESEARCH PAPER: Input and output: A comparison of ESL and FYC Writing Prompts

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Based on Krashen's (1980) Input Hypothesis, Swain's (1995) Output Hypothesis, and in response to Brian Tomlinson's (2014) call for principled evaluations of language materials, this study compared assignment sheets provided by ESL instructors from Ball State's Intensive English Institute (IEI) with assignment sheets provided by First Year Composition (FYC) instructors. Instructors were recruited from the advanced (levels 5 and 6) IEI Writing courses and FYC English 103 courses. Assignment sheets were coded based on Littlejohn's (2010) model of materials assessment and subject to a Chi-squared test of independence to determine if there were significant differences in assignment feature frequency between the two contexts. The target features were input form (graphic, individual words/phrases, extended discourse [based on number of words] – written, extended discourse [based on number of words] – aural), input source (instructor, student, or course textbook, or course-external), input nature (fiction, non-fiction) and output form (graphic, individual words/phrases, extended discourse [based on number of words] – written, extended discourse [based on number of words] – aural), output nature (fiction, non-fiction, compare/contrast, cause/effect, and narrative). The results of this study shed light on the transition from the ESL to FYC writing courses, while also presenting potential problems with the application of Littlejohn's model.