

**Genre Analysis and Curriculum Design:**

**Meeting the needs of an ESP Program for Migrant Micronesians in Hawaii**

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SLS 680P: ESP/EAP Pedagogy

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#### **Introduction**

In January 2012, two other researches and I began volunteering at a homeless shelter in Honolulu, Hawaii, with the initial intent of providing an ESL class to the residents. Only three things were known before volunteering at the shelter: (1) the clients would be adults, (2) they would be recent immigrants predominantly from Micronesia, and (3) the shelter had requested that “life skills” be the content behind the English program that we were suddenly going to run. Without an established curriculum, we entered the shelter with the understanding that we were going to have to develop a language program from scratch. From those humble beginnings, overwhelmed, we began what was to become a 6-month adventure into needs analysis, ESP theory, and a set of experiences that changed our lives as English teachers.

Our time at the shelter, mostly spent working with the students in the English class, was documented in a study that we co-authored (Barbee, Escalona, & Holdway, 2012). The purpose of that study was to investigate the situational and linguistic needs of a prospective English program to be offered to adult English language learners at the homeless shelter in Hawaii. After exploring the socio-political factors that affected migrant populations, the needs of adult language learners, and current ESP theory, we worked to design a needs analysis that utilized using time, methodological, investigator, and data triangulation.

The culmination of the study was the development of the needs analysis, as well as the creation of course objectives, materials, and a teachers’ manual, with the project’s framework centered around theories of pedagogy, more specifically in relation to English for Specific

Purposes (ESP) and adult ESL learners. The study remains valuable to the field of language learning and teaching as it is situated outside an academic context and directly involves the educational needs of a population not often addressed in applied linguistics literature. This paper is an attempt to bridge the needs analysis done in that first study with pedagogy that addresses the need for genre theory and critical pedagogy in designing curriculum for migrant populations. An example lesson plan will be presented as a snapshot into what such a curriculum would look like—one that is informed by an extensive needs analysis, ideas in critical pedagogy, and genre theory.

### **Context of the Program**

In 2009, the foreign-born represented 17.3 percent of Hawaii's total population (Migrant Policy Institute, 2009). This situation was heightened by the Compact of Free Association, which made residents of Micronesia eligible to enter the United States without a visa or time limit. The three main reasons for migration are improved health care, education, and employment opportunities; however, after arrival there is often the inability to find work, the most prevalent reason being English language challenges (Barbee, Escalona, and Holdway, 2012). As a result, there are a number of Micronesian migrants in Honolulu's homeless shelters in need of language education focused on English for specific purposes, or ESP (Barbee et al., 2012; Hezel & Samuel, 2006; "Status of Micronesian Migrants," 2003).

### **Literature Review**

In this case of our ESP class, the specific purpose for the students was not only needing to learn English to acquire the linguistic tools they needed daily to survive and live in Hawaii, "life skills," but also as teachers our goal was to empower them to be able to discern their own linguistic needs for themselves and act on that knowledge. Belcher (2006) states that ESP

“assumes there are problems, or lacks, that education can ameliorate” and that “the problems are unique to specific learners in specific contexts” (p. 135). In alignment with Belcher, the ESP program that was designed focused on a specific population of learners, adult Micronesian immigrants, who, because of having newly arrived in the U. S. share certain needs, linguistic and otherwise, that are specific to them and their new home, Hawaii. Because the linguistic needs of the learners are absolutely necessary for survival in a country that does not share the students’ first language (L1), English education that focuses on “life skills” is rightly a critical need and thus was a priority for the shelter to provide the residents with such a service. The critical nature of English for “life skills” provides the theoretical framework behind the inclusion of genre theory in the curriculum design process (Belcher, 2006).

Genre theory deals with how communicative events contextualize the target language (Hyon, 1996) and inspects the different directions of influence on a particular population. This population can include the surrounding social environment of the learner, the sets of communication from institutions or occupations, and the purposeful communicative and activity systems (Belcher, 2006). Swales (1990) defines genre as “a class of communicative events, the members of which share some set of communicative purposes. These purposes are recognized by the expert members of the parent discourse community” (p. 58). Whether expert or not, this community, Hyland (2007) says has “little difficulty recognizing similarities in the texts they use frequently and are able to draw on their repeated experiences with such texts to read, understand, and perhaps write them relatively easily” (p. 149.) In short, genre theory involves allowing students access to a certain genre of writing or discourse so that they can make their own discoveries and invest in the own understanding of that certain genre. The lesson plan that I will present in this paper, for example, involves the job application form. While some may argue that

job applications do not a genre make, it does, however, meet Swales' (1990) definition. Picture now, in your mind, your image of what a job application is. If we were to share with each other the images that we had in our minds, it is most likely that most of us would have had the same image and that those images would have had the same perceived purpose, the purpose being the standardization of the job application process so that every applicant for a specific job would have the chance to supply the same information as everyone else applying for the same job. Some may disagree, but I don't think I am far off. It is this shared interpretation that makes a job application a genre like any other. For every job application, especially for entry-level work, applications share similar macrostructures, e.g., sections for biographical data, work history, educational history, availability, signature line, etc. Even the vocabulary and minute nuances can be similar, e.g., D.O.B., So. Sec. No., etc.

Yet, before I focus in on the job application lesson plan, I should back up and give an overview of how needs were assessed and how we originally arrived at the conclusion that there would be a need for such a lesson, the needs analysis. First, as already determined by the shelter, the focus of the new ESP program would be "life skills" English. Having no clue as to what "skills" the students already had and needed, we designed a needs analysis around the primary stakeholders at the shelter, the teachers/staff and the students. To elicit information from the teachers, a questionnaire was developed; for the students, we created a lesson that would have them write or speak personal narratives about their life in Hawaii so far (Barbee et al., 2012).

From the teachers and staff members' perspective, we cited the major themes found in the analysis of the results from their questionnaires; the following list (Table 1) of students' situational linguistic needs was developed.

Table 1

*Objective Linguistic Needs for a Life Skills Program in Hawaii*

- 
- Finding employment (highest frequency of those surveyed) and related skills:
    - Reading job advertisements
    - Filling out applications
    - Understanding questions in an job interview
  - Acquiring housing and related skills:
    - Budgeting
    - Paying bills
  - Meeting social, community, and legal responsibilities
  - Communicating health and physical needs
  - Being aware of social services related to welfare and healthcare
  - Accessing higher education
  - Being involved with their children's education
- 

*Note:* This chart was adapted from Barbee et al. (2012)

What's more, we also wanted to know the subjective needs of the students by examining their self-reported narratives. The results from the students' portion of the needs analysis are as shown in Table 2.

Table 2

*Subjective Linguistic Needs in an English for "Life Skills" Program in Hawaii*


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Reasons for learning English	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• to apply for and get a job</li> <li>• to speak with the case manager</li> <li>• to speak English without needing an interpreter</li> <li>• to expand vocabulary</li> </ul>
Reasons for living in Hawai'i	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• for children's education</li> <li>• to find a better job</li> <li>• Hawaii is bigger and wealthier than Micronesia</li> </ul>
Expected duration of stay in Hawaii	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• for an indefinite amount of time (most students answered either "forever" or "for a long, long time")</li> </ul>

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*Note:* This chart was adapted from from Barbee et al. (2012)

Both the subjective and the objective needs, as well as situational concerns, were considered when designing the curriculum. Table 3 represents the functional/situational syllabus that resulted from the totality of the needs analysis conducted at the shelter, including data from the

teachers/staff members, students, and other stakeholders invested in the betterment and education of the target group, the students.

Table 3

*Syllabus Design and Objectives for an Adult ESP Curriculum*

Functional/Situational Category	Learning Outcome
Greetings and Introductions	1.1 Exchange greetings and basic personal information (e.g., name, place of origin, age) with others in different settings, such as encounters in the classroom, at the store, or at the workplace through role-playing
Forms and Documents	2.1 Complete essential forms by filling in name, address, telephone number(s), birth date, family information, place of origin, and language spoken at home, on a sample form
Personal Information	3.1 Communicate information about family, occupation, hobbies, skills, etc., through conversations with peers and the teacher
Directions	4.1 Read a local map of the area (e.g., Honolulu) by identifying street names including their corresponding abbreviations (e.g., St.=Street) 4.2 Read a local map of the area (e.g., Honolulu) using cardinal directions (e.g., N King St., S King St.) 4.3 Use the appropriate prepositional adverbs (e.g., on the corner of, in the front of, beside) in giving directions 4.4 Use question words, “where” and “how” in asking for directions
Events and Scheduling	5.1 Read a clock to tell the time by transcribing time from an analog clock to its digital form 5.2 Identify days, months, and years using a Western calendar 5.3 Make appointments for a certain time and date by inserting them into a Western calendar 5.4 Use frequency vocabulary when discussing daily/weekly routine (e.g., never, sometimes, often, always, daily, twice a day/week) 5.5 Write daily/weekly schedules including the name, day, time, and the frequency of an event.
Shopping	6.1 Describe items as they become relevant in a clerk-costumer interaction through role-playing (e.g., adjectives for describing objects and demonstrative pronouns) 6.2 Identify the denomination and amount of U.S. currency 6.3 Use appropriate vocabulary when asking for and giving the price of merchandise 6.4 Use U.S. currency and the appropriate vocabulary to complete a transaction for clothing or other merchandise through role-playing
Phone Calls	7.1 Make a call identifying themselves and the purpose for the call 7.2 Make a call to make an appointment (e.g., doctor’s appointment) using vocabulary from objective 5.3
Finding a Job	8.1 Use a newspaper to identify potential jobs by identifying type of job, phone numbers, addresses, and/or emails 8.2 Request information about job positions by requesting an application form or asking for more information 8.3 Identify common feature of a job application. 8.4 Complete a job application using personal information by filling out a sample form from an actual business.

Job Interviews	9.1 Answer possible questions in an interview setting by carrying out mock-interviews 9.2 Identify the various steps in an interview process and the associated etiquette by organizing a mock-interview dialogue
Medical Needs	10.1 Answer questions based on previous medical records/experience/current medication 10.2 Communicate physical needs or emotional needs associated with pain, discomfort, or other related issues by role-playing the relevant encounters
Computer Literacy Skills	11.1 Identify the basic components of a PC computer and its external hardware 11.2 Use the basic functions of a word processing application such as MS Word (e.g., toolbars, spaces and indentations, etc.) by typing a brief narrative 11.3 Navigate the web using a search engine, such as Google, to make basic searches for information
Setting up an Email Account	12.1 Set up an email account using Gmail 12.2 Identify the different parts of an email webpage interface (e.g., Send button, To:/Subject: input bar/ Inbox button) by sending an email to their peers 12.3 Correspond using email (e.g. sending and receiving emails) with a specific audience or purpose in mind (e.g., professional versus casual correspondence) by sending an actual email to the teacher

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*Note:* This chart was taken from Barbee et al. (2012)

For the purposes of this paper, the situational category *finding at job* was selected as the content for the lesson plan. The specific learning outcomes chosen for this lesson plan were 8.3, *Identify common feature of a job application* and 8.4, *Complete a job application using personal information by filling out a sample form from an actual business*. The lesson plan can be seen below:



# Lesson Plan

Date:

## Job Applications

Lesson Name

### “Life skills” English (90 min.)

Class

**The Context of the class:** This ESP program was designed for an adult migrant population in the U.S. There are approximately 15 students in the class. A needs analysis shows that students are mainly interested in and need English for “lifeskills” and, more specifically, to communicate in their daily lives, to find housing, to find jobs, and in dealing with healthcare matters. The students are predominantly from Micronesia and have been identified as beginning to low-intermediate level learners. Most have high intrinsic motivation for the program and English. The teacher is a native English speaker.

### Learning Objectives:

The students will:

- identify common features of job applications.
- Fill-out a job application form using personal information.
- Use strategies, i.e., dictionary, context clues, etc., to determine the meanings of unknown vocabulary

### Materials:

- Sets of blank job applications (enough for each group of 2/3)
- White board
- Blank Information form handout
- Karuta activity cards
- Textbook, *Life Skills and Test Prep 1 & 2*

Task	Time	Procedure
<b>Warmup:</b> Personal Information Form Wall Race	15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Before class, the teacher will have prepared 7 pieces of paper with different bits of information about a fictional person. The teacher will tape these pieces of paper around the room (see Appendix A).</li> <li>• Students will make pairs. Teacher will give each pair a handout with a blank information form on it (Appendix B).</li> <li>• Using the 7 sheets of paper around the room, the pair must work together to fill the information into the matching fields on the information form. Either the pair may travel around the room with the form, or the form can be required to remain at a central location so that students have to use their memories to fill-out the form.</li> <li>• The first team to correctly fill out their form wins.</li> </ul>
<b>Card Slapping Activity</b>	15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Before class, the teacher will have prepared sets of 12 cards each with a picture of a different job (Appendix C).</li> <li>• The students will form groups of two or three. Teacher will give each group a set of the cards.</li> <li>• Students will arrange the cards on their desk, facing up.</li> <li>• While the teacher says the name of a job, the students must slap and take the card that matches that job name.</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The student with the most cards in their group when all the professions have been called wins.</li> </ul>
<b>Introduction to Job Applications</b> Identify common features of job applications and develop new vocabulary	25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students make groups of three, while teacher passes out a set of 3 blank job applications (Sample Job applications were found online through a basic Google search) to each group. (Make sure each person in a group has a different application.)</li> <li>Teacher will ask each group to look at the applications and compare them. Together, each will circle words or phrases or labels that are the same on all applications. Students will make a running list of these words.</li> <li>Teacher will record some of the words from each group on the board, then the teacher will ask if students know the words. If students don't know the words, they must record them in their vocabulary diaries so that they can be looked up later.</li> <li>With the list of common words on the board, the teacher will call on students to give their own information in relation to the word. For example, common words on a job application may include name, phone number, date of birth, Are you a citizen of the U.S.?, etc. Students will respond with this information and the teacher will write it on the board beside the corresponding word. This is repeated.</li> <li>The above activity is repeated for the words that are not common to all the applications in each group. The students will draw boxes around these words, and a list will be made on the board again.</li> </ul>
<b>Identifying specific information from a completed job application</b>	20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Working from the textbook, Life Skills and Test Prep, p. 165 &amp; 167) (see Appendix D and E) students will be presented with completed job applications and be asked to identify specific information from the application and answer questions using that information.</li> </ul>
<b>Real World Extension Activity</b>	15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students will be given a real job application (Job Application were gathered from actual business, MacDonalds and Wal-mart applications were used) from a popular company in the area. As time permits, students can work together in groups to fill-out the application with their own information.</li> </ul>
<b>HOMEWORK</b>	NA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><i>Students may work on the Real World Extension Activity if they don't have enough time to finish it in class.</i></li> </ul>

### **Conclusion**

As teachers, it should not be our aim to push a lesson onto a student or force-feed them learning. As teachers, we may sometimes be guilty of thinking, “Learn this, learn that, now this, that, and when you finish, there will be a test. Please mold yourself to my teaching style and don’t get left behind.” Instead, we should be in the business of teaching our students how to learn. It isn’t enough to put a job application, or any genre, into a student’s hand and teach it. Why not restructure the class around the students needs and allow them to explore the material, rather than maintaining a teacher-fronted environment. If the area of genre analysis has taught us anything, it is that we don’t have to reinvent the wheel. As teachers in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, we are fully capable of gathering our own corpuses and allowing our students to experience learning from the ground up, not the top down. As with the lesson plan in this paper, genre analysis allows the teacher to ask, what is a job application and what is its communicative purpose, instead of telling the students what it is and telling them what it does, as if all job applications are exactly the same. Not only can this approach empower teachers, by “provid[ing] access to the patterns and possibilities of variations in valued texts” (Hyland, 2007, p. 150), but it also can empower our students as well. One day, they will find themselves outside of the classroom, on their own. The genre approach to curriculum design gives students the tools they need to meet an unknown and to teach themselves.

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Warren, T. (2007). *Life skills and test prep 1*. White Plains, NY: Pearson Education.

## Appendix A

808-354-4555 cell phone	Hilo, Hawaii	Miss Theresa R. Fuji
She does not have a husband and has never had a husband and doesn't want a husband.	96833	3204 Wainani Ave.
591-45-3201	Theresa's home phone number is 808-292-7843.	Apt. 29B

## Appendix B

**DIRECTIONS:** Please print clearly. Use blue or black ink.

1. TITLE: Mr. Mrs. Miss Ms.

2. NAME: \_\_\_\_\_  
FIRST NAME MIDDLE INITIAL LAST NAME

3. ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_  
NUMBER AND STREET APARTMENT  
\_\_\_\_\_  
CITY STATE ZIP CODE

4. TELEPHONE: \_\_\_\_\_  
HOME OTHER

5. SEX: MALE \_\_\_\_\_ FEMALE \_\_\_\_\_

6. MARITAL STATUS:  
MARRIED \_\_\_\_\_ SINGLE \_\_\_\_\_ DIVORCED \_\_\_\_\_ SEPARATED \_\_\_\_\_

7. SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER (SSN): \_\_\_\_\_

8. SIGNATURE: \_\_\_\_\_

Warren, T. (2007). *Life skills and test prep 1*. White Plains, NY: Pearson Education.

Appendix C

1. bus driver	4. doctor	7. musician	10. plumber
2. construction worker	5. housekeeper	8. office clerk	11. salesperson
3. cook	6. lawyer	9. painter	12. waiter

Warren, T. (2007). *Life skills and test prep 1*. White Plains, NY: Pearson Education.



## Appendix D

## Learn



**41** John Hall is filling out an employment application. Look at the first part of the application. Listen and point to the words.

**SAMMY'S**  
**EMPLOYMENT APPLICATION**

**PERSONAL INFORMATION**

NAME John M. Hall PHONE 310-555-2167  
First Middle Last

ADDRESS 1500 Sawmill Boulevard Los Angeles CA 98765  
Street City State Zip Code

Are you older than 18? Yes ☒ No ☐

**AVAILABILITY**

When can you begin work? July 1 2007  
Month Day Year

Are you interested in full-time? ☒ Part-time? ☐

Can you work overtime? Yes ☒ No ☐

Hours Available

	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<b>FROM</b>	2:00 P.M.	2:00 P.M.	2:00 P.M.	2:00 P.M.	2:00 P.M.	2:00 P.M.	2:00 P.M.
<b>TO</b>	9:00 P.M.	9:00 P.M.	9:00 P.M.	9:00 P.M.	9:00 P.M.	9:00 P.M.	9:00 P.M.

Are you legally able to work in the U.S.? Yes ☒ No ☐

Do you have transportation to work? Yes ☒ No ☐

## Practice

**A**

Look at the employment application in Learn. Fill in the information.

- Is John over the age of 18? \_\_\_\_\_.
- John can begin work on \_\_\_\_\_.
- He is available to work from \_\_\_\_\_ day to \_\_\_\_\_ day.
- He is available to work from \_\_\_\_\_ time to \_\_\_\_\_ time.
- Can he work extra hours? \_\_\_\_\_.
- Is he legally able to work in the United States? \_\_\_\_\_.
- Does he have transportation to work? \_\_\_\_\_.

**B**

PAIRS. Check your answers.

## Appendix E

## Learn



**42** John Hall is filling out the other sections of the employment form. Look at the form. Listen and point to the words.

**MOST RECENT EDUCATION:**

Name Jefferson High School Street Address 5432 South Washington Boulevard  
 City Los Angeles State CA Zip Code 98765 Phone Number 310-555-1679  
 Teacher or Counselor Ms. Simmons Department English Last Grade Completed 12  
 Now Enrolled? Yes ☐ No ☒ Graduated? Yes ☒ No ☐ School Sports or Activities baseball

**WORK HISTORY:** (List your two most recent jobs.)

- Company The Grill Address 2003 Beverly Boulevard City Los Angeles State CA Zip 91234  
 Area Code 323 Phone Number 555-1234 Job waiter  
 Supervisor Martha James Dates Worked: From 2/05 To present  
 Salary \$7.00 hr. Reason for Leaving looking for a better job
- Company Pat's Cafe Address 8400 W. Sunrise Blvd. City West Hollywood State CA Zip 95432  
 Area Code 323 Phone Number 555-8585 Job bus person  
 Supervisor Pat Dates Worked: From 6/03 To 2/05  
 Salary \$6.00/hr. Reason for Leaving restaurant closed

**MILITARY HISTORY:**

Have you served in the U.S. Military? Yes ☐ No ☒

## Practice



**A** Look at the employment application in Learn. Fill in the information.

1. Did John graduate from high school? \_\_\_\_\_
2. What was John's most recent job? \_\_\_\_\_
3. Where did John most recently work? \_\_\_\_\_
4. Is he still working there? \_\_\_\_\_
5. What was John's job in 2004? \_\_\_\_\_