**Output task 2: Produce a needs analysis outline & instrument – Paul Walsh**

‘Why do so many people all over the world go through the trouble of enrolling in second language courses, buying dictionaries and grammars, spending hours practising grammar rules, experimenting with new sounds and new words, acquiring new orthographic systems and taking nerve-racking exams? In many language educational approaches, this question is hardly ever asked, and if it is, the answer tends to be restricted to something as vague as 'to become a proficient user' or 'to acquire knowledge of the target language'.

**Introduction**

Avermaet & Gysen (2006:17), quoted above, highlight a paradox in ELT: that when teachers consider curriculum design, they often consider the ‘What’ and the ‘How’ but rarely the ‘Why’. Long’s ‘strong’ version of TBLT (Long 2014) aims to address the shortcomings of other LT approaches by being grounded in the ‘why’ and providing a rationale for curriculum design based on evidenced real-world needs, and I intend to use Long’s version of TBLT to guide my needs analysis.

**I. Background, a description of the target learners, and the purpose of the NA**

The target learners are C2-level learners at the Humboldt University Language Centre in Berlin. The learners involved take extra-curricular courses to improve their English, though often without a clear purpose in mind; echoing Abbott (1980) and his notion of TENOR, we might class this is SENOR: Studying English for No Obvious Reason. To address this, the course I am designing is called STUDENT JOURNAL, where learners both create and manage the production of their own undergraduate journal.

In a best-case TBLT NA scenario, the institution identifies a specific communication problem that needs to be addressed (see Sarafini et al. 2015). Such scenarios include ‘survival’ language for refugees and immigrants, or English for Special Purposes such as the training of army personnel. However, it is unclear whether university language centres, often at one remove from the main university and its research activity, are able to provide such insight into the *academic*  or future *career* needs of students; furthermore, in Germany there is also the additional problem that university language teachers *per se* are not classed as *Wissenschaftler* and are not officially permitted to carry out research as part of their jobs.

Nevertheless, the ‘need’ for undergraduate journals has been researched extensively in the U.S. The Boyer Commission on Educating Undergraduates in a Research University (Boyer 1998: 24) identified ten recommendations to change U.S. undergraduate education, one of these being to connect course work with real communication: ‘Every university graduate should understand that no idea is fully formed until it can be communicated, and that the organization required for writing and speaking is part of the thought process that enables one to understand material fully. Dissemination of results is an essential and integral part of the research process, which means that training in research cannot be considered complete without training in effective communication.’

One specific need has also been identified by Walkington (2008) among U.K. undergraduate geography students: the need to close the research cycle/ research process gap. That is, undergraduates do not experience the complete research cycle that a real-world researcher would experience and benefit from, as their research process ends at the assessment stage when their work is graded.

Following on from this, the over-riding need for learning how to create an undergraduate journal seems obvious: to produce the next generation of researchers and scholars.[[1]](#footnote-1) However, another no less interesting need has been identified by one supervising editor of an undergraduate journal, Tolbert (2020), who notes the need ‘to provide a teaching resource for instructors of American Studies looking for exemplary work to use in the classroom', a maxim that might apply for others looking for ‘exemplary work’ to use in their own contexts.

**II. An outline of the NA procedure for STUDENT JOURNAL**

Step 1: Compile a list of possible informants (domain experts, past student journal editors, and student journal editors now).

Step 1A: Create and pilot survey containing questions by which informants identify broad processes, key and problematic target tasks, and any other useful information.

Step 1B: Send out survey to informants.

Step 2: From survey results compile list of target tasks used in the production of a student journal.

Step 3: Verify this list by sending it out to informants to gain further feedback.

Step 4: Compile final list of target tasks involved in setting up a student journal.

**III. The instrument (see below)**

The instrument consists of:

* Questions for Domain Experts: TEACHER/ LECTURER
* Questions for Domain Experts: STUDENT EDITOR (NOW)
* Questions for Domain Experts: STUDENT EDITOR (PAST)

**IV. Instructions**

The instrument is to be sent out as a MS Word document to the informants or converted into an online survey for ease of use (eg Survey Monkey).

**STUDENT JOURNAL - Questions for Domain Experts: TEACHER/ LECTURER

Introduction**This questionnaire aims to gain information about four things:

A. The broad processes involved in the production of an undergraduate academic journal.

B. The key tasks, and the problematic tasks involved in the production of an undergraduate academic journal.

C. Key skills or competences needed when creating an undergraduate academic journal.

D. Other useful information.

**A. The broad processes involved in setting up an undergraduate academic journal**

1. *Set Up - Content Management/ Peer Review – Production – Dissemination.* These are four broad processes involved in producing an undergraduate journal. Would you agree with this list or are there other broad processes involved?

2. Which of the processes involved in producing an undergraduate journal are the most enjoyable for the students and why?

3. Which of the processes involved in producing an undergraduate journal are the most challenging for the students and why?

4. Can you give any advice on how to help a group of students manage these broad processes?

**B. The key tasks, and the problematic tasks involved in the production of an undergraduate academic journal.**

5. In the table below can you list three of the **KEY TASKS** involved in publishing an undergraduate journal – and list typical problems students have with these tasks.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Key Task | Problems undergraduate students have with this task |
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6. In the table below can you list three **PROBLEMATIC TASKS** involved in publishing an undergraduate journal – and list typical problems students have with these tasks.

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| --- | --- |
| Problematic Task | Problems undergraduate students have with this task |
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**C. Key skills or competences needed when creating an undergraduate academic journal.**

7. What are some of the key skills or competences that students need when creating an academic journal?

8. Which key skills or competences do you feel that students were most difficult for students to acquire?

**D. Other useful information**

9. What advice would you give for a teacher that wants to mentor a group of students in setting up an academic journal?

10. Are there any additional questions regarding the creation of a student journal that should be in this questionnaire?

**STUDENT JOURNAL - Questions for Domain Experts: STUDENT EDITOR (NOW)**

**Introduction**This questionnaire aims to gain information about four things:

A. The broad processes involved in the production of an undergraduate academic journal.

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C. Key skills or competences needed when creating an undergraduate academic journal.

D. Other useful information.

**A. The broad processes involved in setting up an undergraduate academic journal**

1. *Set Up - Content Management/ Peer Review – Production – Dissemination.* These are four broad processes involved in producing an undergraduate journal. Would you agree with this list or are there other broad processes involved?

2. Which of the processes involved in producing an undergraduate journal are the most enjoyable you and why?

3. Which of the processes involved in producing an undergraduate journal are the most challenging for you and why?

**B. The key tasks, and the problematic tasks involved in the production of an undergraduate academic journal.**

5. In the table below can you list three of the **KEY TASKS** involved in publishing an undergraduate journal – and list the problems you or your peers have had with these tasks.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Key Task | Problems you or your peers have had with this task |
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6. In the table below can you list three **PROBLEMATIC TASKS** involved in publishing an undergraduate journal – and list the problems you or your peers have had with these tasks.

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| Problematic Task | Problems you or your peers have had with this task |
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**C. Key skills or competences needed when creating an undergraduate academic journal.**

7. What are some of the key skills or competences that students need when creating an academic journal?

8. Which key skills or competences do you feel are most difficult to acquire?

**D. Other useful information**

9. What advice would you give for a teacher that wants to mentor a group of students in setting up an academic journal?

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**Introduction**This questionnaire aims to gain information about four things:

A. The broad processes involved in the production of an undergraduate academic journal.

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8. Which key skills or competences do you feel were the most difficult to acquire?

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**References**

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1. I should point out here that the ‘Berlin Graduate School’ is the institution officially tasked with training future scholars at Humboldt University, and their pedagogical model seems to be to ‘helicopter in’ prestigious academics and experts from Germany and abroad to achieve this goal. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)