ANALYZING TEXTS FOR CONTENT-BASED INSTRUCTION

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Texts: The foundation of CBI and immersion curriculum

- Texts can be written (articles, books, official documents, blogs, etc.) or oral (lectures, tape recordings, radio broadcasts, DVDs, etc.).
- When possible, a range of different text types should be selected for CBI or immersion teaching to expose students to a variety of genres.
- For CBI and immersion courses, fewer readings (than in a course taught in students’ L1) should be assigned, and they should be selected carefully.
- When possible, texts should be selected so that they can be used in several thematic units or be revisited for different purposes.
Selecting texts

• Is the text a type (genre) that students have familiarity with? What differences exist between this text and its counterparts in students’ L1?

• How does the text fit into the context of the curriculum unit? Is there cultural information that may not be familiar to students?

• Does the text have special features to help orient readers (graphics, pictures, glossed words, clear, logical organization, text features like boldface/italics etc.)? Are there any special features that may lead students to misinterpret the meaning?

• How challenging is the language of the text (tenses & structures used, vocabulary, length of sentences/paragraphs, syntactic complexity)?
Selecting texts

• For the immersion context, Cloud et al. (2000) suggest that the following be considered when choosing materials:
  • Proficiency demand
  • Contextual support
  • Language authenticity
  • Intended audience
  • Cultural features
  • Intellectual, aesthetic and emotional satisfaction
Selecting texts for the early reading stage:

- Gibbons (2002, p. 99) identifies the following characteristics:
  - Repetitive language
  - A repetitive event that builds up into a cumulative story
  - Universal themes
  - Illustrations that clearly represent the meaning in the text to aid readers
  - Clear print, well-laid-out pages that aren’t too ‘busy’
  - Good, authentic language that is not contrived
  - Content and language that can be ‘bridged’ for L2 learners
  - Content and language that extends children’s knowledge about reading and the world
  - Interesting content that’s enjoyable to read
Selecting texts for older learners:

• Gibbons (2002, pp. 99-100) identifies the following characteristics:
  • Clear overall text structure
  • Clear signaling devices (titles, headings, clear topic sentences, text cohesion)
  • Appropriate conceptual density
  • Good instructional devices (well organized table of contents, glossary, index, graphic overviews, diagrams, summaries)
A text analysis form was developed by Tara Fortune and Diane Tedick to aid teachers in analyzing texts in a systematic way. While developed for written texts, some of its components may be applicable to analysis of oral texts.

- pdf and Word versions of the form are available at the CoBaLTT site: http://carla.umn.edu/cobalttt/modules/curriculum/ta_form.html

- Examples of completed text analyses are provided.
Components of the form

- Context: unit theme, title (full citation) of the text, grade level being taught and estimated student language proficiency level;
- Content;
- Culture (unfamiliar cultural concepts);
- Genre (text organization);
- Possible Instructional Activities and Learning Strategies;
- Language
  - Vocabulary
  - Communicative/Academic Functions and Grammatical Structures
Context

• Identify theme (big idea) of the curriculum unit in which the text will be used;
• Title: Provide complete bibliographic citation of the text;
• Identify grade level;
• Identify estimated proficiency level of students using standard descriptors (e.g., ACTFL guidelines, ACTFL performance guidelines).
Content (Kucer et al. 1995, Hierarchy of Knowledge, p. 31)

**Generalizations:**
Statements of relationships between two or more concepts. Life lessons. Ex: Change is a part of life. All living organisms change. Change can happen in “cycles.” Living organisms can grow in different ways. Growing organisms have certain needs.

**Concepts:** Words/phrases that denote categories of information that encompass a large number of facts. From many facts emerge larger thoughts, ideas, concepts. Ex: Growth and change; life cycles; stages; living organisms; metamorphosis

**Facts:** Items of specific information at the lowest level of abstraction. Ex: A little egg sleeps on a leaf at night. One Sunday morning a small, very hungry caterpillar set out. It immediately began to look for food. Each day it ate something but remained very hungry. After eating all week long, it got a bad stomachache.
Culture

• ACTFL’s national standards for foreign language learning (1996/1999) framework for cultural knowledge:
  • Cultural products – creations of a particular culture (tangible or intangible)
  • Cultural practices – patterns of social interactions, behaviors
  • Cultural perspectives – the meanings, attitudes, values, beliefs, ideas that underlie the cultural practices and products of a society
[see scaffold developed by Tedick based on ACTFL standards]
Genre

• Text organization
  • Purpose
  • Text structure and discourse features
  • Linguistic features related to genre

[see scaffold developed by Fortune & Tedick based on Gibbons (2002) and Love et al. (2000)]
Possible Instructional Activities and Learning Strategies

• An opportunity to brainstorm tasks and activities that can be created for the classroom to “teach” this text

• Specific learning strategies that can be emphasized (e.g., predicting, identifying main idea and supporting details, etc.)
  [Cloud et al. (2000) refer to them as preview, focused learning and expansion phases; Kucer et al. (1995) as “into”, “through” and “beyond” phases]

http://carla.umn.edu/cobaltt/modules/strategies/uls.html

• Organized in the three lesson phases (pre-, during-, post-)
  [Cloud et al. (2000) refer to them as preview, focused learning and expansion phases; Kucer et al. (1995) as “into”, “through” and “beyond” phases]

http://carla.umn.edu/cobaltt/modules/strategies/ulp.html
Language

• Vocabulary
  • Words
  • Phrases
  • Idioms
  • “chunks”
• Essential vocabulary for learning the content (CO)
• Select vocabulary to review or preview (material or activity related) (CC)
Language

• Communicative/Academic Functions and Grammatical Structures
  • Essential structures/functions for learning the content and carrying out the content-specific aspects of tasks/activities (CO)
  • Select language structures and functions to review or preview and to carry out the tasks/activities (activity-related) (CC)

[see list of functions developed by Tedick; as a scaffold for language structures—use an index from a grammar book]
References


