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)

Text Analysis Form

- 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/cobaltt/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 rela-tionships 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.)
  http://carla.umn.edu/cobaltt/modules/strategies/uls.html

- Organized in the three lesson phases (pre-, during-, post-)
  http://carla.umn.edu/cobaltt/modules/strategies/ulp.html
  [Cloud et al. (2000) refer to them as preview, focused learning and expansion phases; Kucer et al. (1995) as "into", "through" and "beyond" phases]

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

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