

Teaching Language through Other Disciplines

A Workshop for the South Asian
Language Resource Center

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Teaching Language through Other Disciplines

Why Not
Content-Based
Instruction?

Teaching Language through Other Disciplines

- 1) Learning language through / with another discipline
- 2) Learning by doing / Learning by using
- 3) Integration of language and content
- 4) Content drives curriculum (not language forms)
- 5) Authentic language, authentic texts (lacunae, redundancies, assumed cultural background)
- 6) Enhanced motivation for students to communicate (extract information from texts, share information with others in speech and writing)
- 7) Enhanced acquisition of target-language culture

Language Plus

- Using language to access information about the culture
- Consistent with national standards (“5 Cs”: communication, cultures, comparisons, communities, connections)
- Authentic texts
- Learner Motivation

Learning by Doing



- Spirit of American progressive education
- Learner motivation
- Emulation of actual use of native language for communicative purposes

Learning by Doing?

- Read dialogue
- Dialogue seeded with new grammar and vocabulary
- Listen to mp3 of dialogue
- Practice reciting dialogue with partner
- Read article about holiday celebration in C2
- Listen to presentation about C2 holiday rituals and customs
- Write letter to friend in L2

Integration of Language and Other Discipline

- Language is fully privileged in curriculum: explicit language objectives as well as cultural and other objectives
- Consciousness-raising activities (“noticing”)
- Practice with form ... *in context!*
- Design of curriculum: full integration of language and other discipline
- Authentic tasks

Content Drives Curriculum

- Don't sequence topics according to language agenda
- Sequence topics according to content from the non-language discipline
- Enhance learner motivation, keep learner motivation at highest level
- Build from one activity to the next with increasing linguistic complexity

Authentic Language / Tasks

- Using authentic language motivates learners
- Using authentic tasks motivates learners:
Detect, differentiate, identify, compare,
analyze, synthesize, evaluate, develop,
compose, critique, explain... (see handout)
- Tasks typical of both culture and discipline

Learner Motivation

- Learning stops (or slows) when motivation fizzles
- The plateau reached when communicative skills meet communicative needs
- Arbitrariness of “teacher talk” and “textbook language”
- “This stuff is real!”
- Importance of motivation for heritage learners

Heritage Learners in the SA Language Curriculum

- Orality / Literacy
- Non-standard language in the home
- Related language in the home
- Sufficient language skills for communication
- Limited domains
- Limited registers
- Importance of motivation

Enhanced Acquisition

- Focus on genre
- Focus on register
- Focus on content
- Focus on rhetorical structure
- Focus on cultural context
- Comparison with base culture and other cultures with which students are familiar

Teaching Language through Other Disciplines

- Propositional & linguistic sophistication of texts provided as input
- Discipline-based content drives syllabus, not grammatical form
- Focus on meaning: explicit and implicit (teaching students to infer meanings embedded “between the lines”)
- Meaning in cultural context
- Natural responses to discipline-based content

A Proficiency-Centered Approach

We must work with texts and tasks as appropriate for the proficiency levels of our students
(Vygotsky, Krashen)



ACTFL / ILR Scales

ACTFL	ILR
Novice Low, Mid, High	0, 0+
Interm. Low, Mid, High	1, 1+
Adv Low, Mid*, High	2, 2+
Superior	3, 3+
[Superior]	4, 4+ [Distinguished]
[Superior]	5, 5+ [Well Ed. N.S.]

ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines



Guidelines exist
for each of the
four modalities
(listening,
speaking,
reading, writing)

Consider MODES (from National Standards)

- Interpretive Mode (Listening):
recursive, immediacy
- Interpretive Mode (Reading)
- Interpersonal Mode (Speaking)
- Presentational Mode (Speaking)

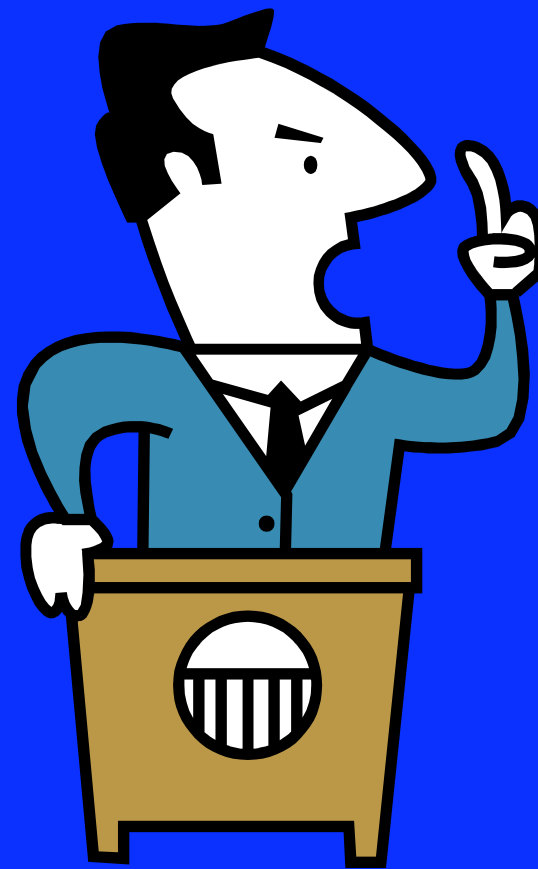
Consider AUDIENCES



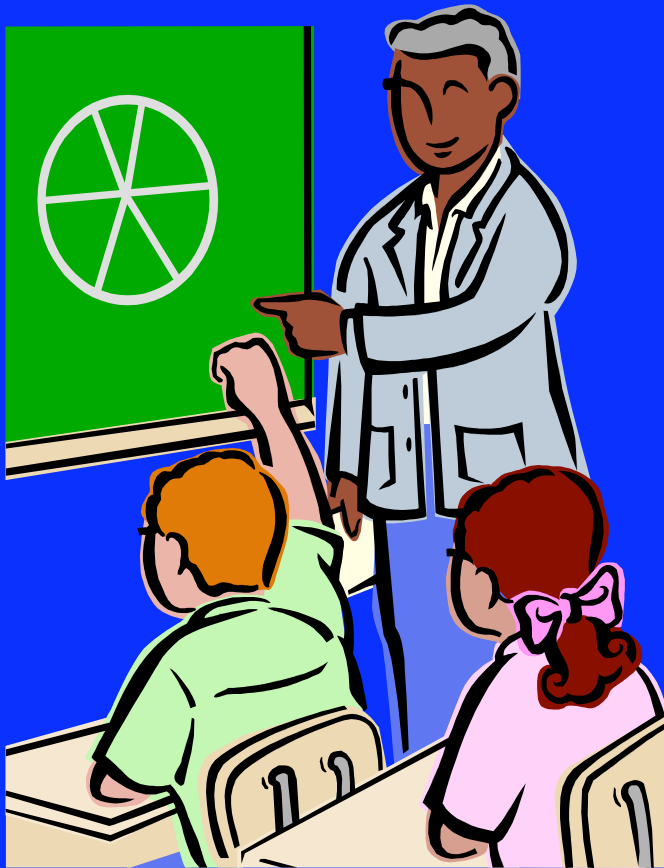
- Speaking to children, teens, non-professional adults, professional adults
- Writing for each of these audiences
- Informal and formal contexts

Consider PURPOSES

- Convince
- Dissuade
- Buy, Sell, Lease
- Engage
- Attract
- Repel
- Other?



Aspects of the Learning / Teaching Dynamic



- Correcting Errors
- Formulating Hypotheses
- Collecting Evidence
- Verifying Hypotheses
- Drawing Conclusions

Leading Discussion or Conducting Drill?

- Convergent responses
- Short responses: what, when, who, where
- Teacher as sole authority
- Teacher mediates each learner comment
- Consensus (subordination to linguistic authority)
- Divergent responses
- Longer responses: why, how (open-ended questions)
- Teacher as facilitator
- Learners respond to one another
- Argument, Supported Opinion, Hypothesis

Which of these two approaches is more consistent with actual lived experience outside the classroom?

The Information Gap



- A natural part of authentic communication
- Derives from our interest in learning something, knowing more

Information Gap vs Display Question

- I want or need to know something that I don't know
- I must ask questions and listen to responses or read texts
- When I hear or read the response, I must identify the info I need
- Like life
- The answer is known before the question is asked
- The learner has no motivation to process the information
- Playing the language learning game

Calling Cinema 1-2-Many

- I want to see a particular film
- I know which film I want to see because I've read a review or heard my friends talking about it
- I listen to the announcement for the title of the film, press the appropriate button
- I listen to the announcement of the times of the showing

Reading a Weather Forecast

- I'm traveling to Madison for a workshop
- I look at weather.com
- I type in Madison, Wisconsin
- I look for weather for the days of my trip
- I determine which clothes I need to bring (umbrella, raincoat?)
- I need not remember the actual words or phrases used in the weather forecast

Facilitating Discussion (1)

- Ask open-ended questions
- Give students silence to reflect
- Ask for evidence, elaboration
- Ask for other students to respond to student comments
- Do not identify “right” or “wrong” answers
- Be the devil’s advocate

Facilitating Discussion (2)

- Ask students to work in pairs or groups to collect, analyze, present evidence
- Small steps for little feet
- Build to bigger conclusions
- Consider carefully how to provide error correction
- Don't shy away from controversy, but insist on staying in language and being respectful
- Don't give them a fish, teach them to fish!

Balance of L1 / L2

- Using L1 all the time to talk about L2
- Choosing when to use L1 to maximize use of L2 for communicative purposes
- Using only L2 in the classroom



Strategy Instruction

- What students know about the language, text, author, genre, culture / cultural context
- What students know about the world
- What students can expect, predict
- Language processing strategies
- Language learning strategies

To Gloss or Not to Gloss

- Consider Proficiency Level
- Consider nature of text
- Life is not glossed
- Students can never know ALL the words of the language
- Students must learn how to guess at meanings of words they do not know

Text Typology

0+ = Survival Mode (Pictures with captions)

1 = Orientation Mode (Programs, Routinized Communications)

2 = Instructive Mode (Factual Accounts)

3 = Evaluative Mode (Inferences, Extended Outbursts)

4/5 = Projective Mode (Unpredictable Turns of Events, Personalized Perspectives)

(Pardee Lowe and James Childs)

Selecting Texts and Tasks

- Select text in accordance with typology (previous slide)
- Develop tasks in accordance with expectations of given proficiency level



Adapting Texts and Tasks



- When text doesn't fit your class's needs: choose another or adapt the one you have if that will have pedagogical value
- Develop tasks accordingly

Reducing Complexity

- Align reader and purpose of writer or speaker (orient reader/listener to text)
- Importance of schema theory
- Use scaffolding to bring students to level of text and task

(Ray Clifford)

A Word about Copyright: Fair Use

- Educational purpose
- Nature of copyrighted text (public's need)
- Amount of text selected for use in class
- Effect of use on market for or value of copyrighted text

Teaching Copyright-Safe

- Freely distribute handouts in class
- Freely post audio and video files to Blackboard or WebCT with limited access for enrolled students only (password protection)
- Freely give students URLs for on-line materials: they are public
- Be very careful about *publishing or selling*: work with your publisher to clear IP rights

Scaffolding Tasks, Integrating Modalities

- Build from tasks lower on Bloom's taxonomy to tasks higher on the same taxonomy **within the same topic / theme**
- Integrate modalities so that students listen and speak, read and write, read and speak, listen and write, etc.
- Keep the topic focus clear, continually increasing the level of complexity as new variables enter the discussion at each phase, spiraling up.

Teaching at Advanced Levels

- Student response must be greater than word, phrase or even sentence-length response
- If student turn is paragraph or longer, teacher must plan to keep other students accountable for their peers' comments
- Only possible if student comments are *meaningful* as well as communicative and grammatically correct

Spiraling Up: Example (1)

- Discussion of images of typical American dwellings
- Discussion of images of typical dwellings in a region of India / Pakistan
- Real estate advertisements (read, view or listen)
- Short article on housing issues



Spiraling Up: Example (2)

- Letter to editor about housing problems
- Radio commentary on homelessness
- Analytical essay on economic trends (e.g., growing disparity of incomes between urban and rural citizens) in housing
- Student research on housing trends in different cities or regions within language area



Spiraling Up: Example (3)

- Student presentations
- Student debates
- Student reports

Note: written work should be written in multiple phases (with lots of editing) and should be *shared* among students and faculty (perhaps published to the web). Written work should be PUBLIC, as in the native language, not work written just for audience of one.



Building Islands

- Students practice rehearsed presentations at the proficiency level to which they aspire
- As they build more rehearsed presentations, they begin to establish a series of islands that can ultimately grow into a peninsula, connect to the mainland

(Boris Shekhtman)

Building toward Proficiency

Rehearsed Texts: Achievement

Semi-Rehearsed Texts: Performance

Utterly Spontaneous: Proficiency

Sequencing Tasks in Lesson

- 1) Overview: Motivate Learners
- 2) Review/Preview: Review of Previous Material, Introduction of New Elements
- 3) Present: Present New Material
- 4) Teacher-Centered Process: Focus Learners' Attention
- 5) Student-Centered Practice: Learners Use Material
- 6) Accountability: Students Demonstrate What They've Learned
- 7) Follow-Up: Learning and Language Strategies, Cultural Analysis, Transition to Next Set of Tasks

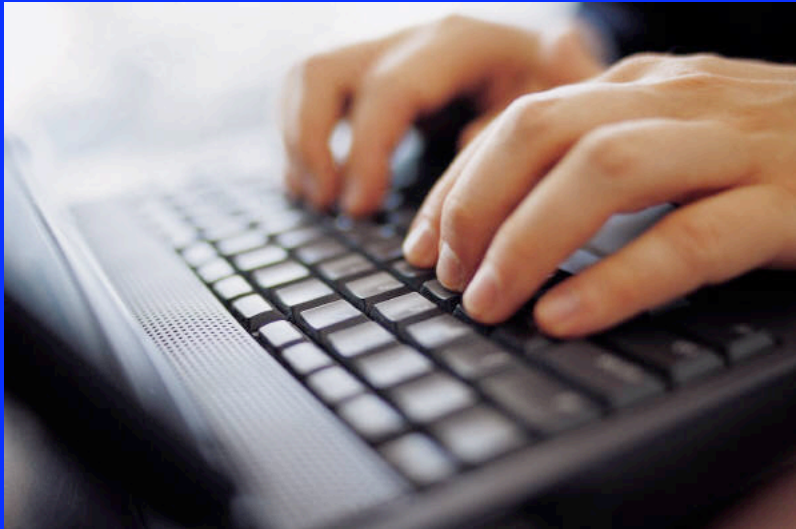
Plan for Learner Roles

- Design lessons not only to account for what the teacher does
- In each phase of the lesson, plan for what the learners will do as a group and what each learner will do individually (especially important at more advanced levels)

Assessing Student Performance

- Model successful performances
- Provide students with group tasks (ungraded)
- Explain assessment criteria; ask groups to assess sample work
- Provide clear learning objectives and assessment criteria correlated with those objectives

Sample Assessment Criteria: Writing (See Handout)



- Communicative Content
- Organization
- Syntax
- Register
- Lexicon
- Accuracy
- Originality
- Peer Editing

Sample Assessment Criteria: Speaking (See Handout)

- Task Completion
- Rate of Speech
- Register
- Syntax
- Lexicon
- Accuracy
- Pronunciation & Intonation



Teaching Language through Other Disciplines

- Construct thematic units
- Use scaffolding to build interest and curiosity, as well as expertise as you move from lower-level texts to higher-level texts
- Integrate language and discipline in tasks (what students DO with language)
- Keep focus on content of study and language learning and processing strategies
- Use naturally occurring information gaps
- Construct appropriate learning tasks

Keep in Mind

- Author's purposes / Student's purposes
- Style, register, genre
- Text typology (mode of text)
- Modes of communication
- Proficiency levels
- 5 Cs
- Spiraling topic up while integrating all 4 modalities, keeping students accountable for all classroom communication

Importance of Collaboration

As a field, you can develop a library of texts and tasks, cataloguing them through a SALRC-maintained (and password protected) website with tags for language, proficiency level, type of text (acc. to typology), and topic

Imagine what you could accomplish if each person in this room committed to creating 4 tasks a year to share with the field!

Your Questions?