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Linking language & literary-cultural content: A multiliteracies approach to advanced undergraduate FL teaching

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Overview

- Introduction: Language & literary-cultural content in the advanced undergraduate FL curriculum

- Defining a multiliteracies approach: Key concepts

- Carrying out the approach: Pedagogical practices

- Examples

- Your turn: Meeting pedagogical challenges with multiliteracies concepts & pedagogical practices

I. INTRODUCTION

The challenge / opportunity

- We have four years to develop competent, culturally literate users of the language

- We need a curriculum that best facilitates this development in light of:
  - Limited contact hours
  - Focus on literary and cultural study within humanistic educational tradition
  - L1-literate adult learners
  - Long-term, non-linear nature of second language acquisition (SLA)

(Maxim, 2008)

The typical local reality

Two-tiered or bifurcated departmental structure, manifested in:

- **Instructional approach**
  - CLT vs. literary-cultural study [lower vs. upper levels]
  - Bridge courses

- **Personnel configuration**, i.e., non-tenure track/TAs vs. tenure track

- **Assumptions about language acquisition**--"language" vs. "content" courses

(Maxim, 2008)

Example: The language-content divide in an advanced cultural studies course

"students in their third year of French should be prepared to

put their linguistic skills to use ... [book name] does not

focus on skill development and language acquisition"

(Preface, top-selling French cultural studies textbook)

->Reflects the assumption discussed in the literature that higher levels of linguistic development emerge organically through "comprehensible input and unstructured discussion" (Byrnes & Kord, 2002, p. 37)

What does the research tell us about linguistic development in advanced undergraduate FL courses?

- Teacher talk dominates & opportunities for dialogue to extend into discourse are limited (Donato & Brooks, 2004; Mantero, 2002)

- Undergraduate students may not deem the ability to read & write texts to be significant for them (Bueno, 2002)

- Teachers and students posit different goals in relation to the role of linguistic development (Polio & Zyzik, 2009)

- Form-focused instruction and negotiation in relation to student errors are lacking (Zyzik & Polio, 2008)

2007 MLA Report

"The two-tiered configuration has outlived its usefulness and needs to evolve. The critical moment in which language departments find themselves is therefore also an opportunity ... **Replacing the two-tiered language-literature structure with a broader and more coherent curriculum in which language, culture, and literature are taught as a continuous whole ...** will reinvigorate language departments as valuable academic units central to the humanities and to the missions of institutions of higher learning." (p. 4)

Meeting the aims of the 2007 MLA Report

"Can we find principles for assuring that the culture or content of a second cultural area and the second language are learned simultaneously and with reference to one another, and can we imagine that intricate linkage in a manner that would, within a reasonable length of time, enable learners to develop levels of ability in that language that would approach a competent L2 literacy, perhaps even a competent L2 cultural literacy?" (Byrnes, 2008, p. 103)

How do we get there from here?

- Formulate shared departmental goals

- Establish a close linkage between language & content at all levels

- Determine a clear principle for organizing and sequencing content

- Adopt a consistent pedagogy for engaging the content

- Implement a systematic approach for assessing the degree to which the curriculum meets its stated goals at all levels of instruction

Maxim (2005)

II. DEFINING A MULTILITERACIES APPROACH

Notions of literacy: Your turn

What are your associations with the word LITERACY? Write down the first three things that come to mind.

What does being *literate* in a given language mean for you?

Feel free to draw on L1 or L2 learning or teaching experiences as you take a few moments to write down your ideas; afterwards, you will discuss your ideas briefly in a small group.

Sociocultural

- Collective determination of language uses and literacy practices
- Interweaving of literacy practices with other social practices
- Apprenticeship into ways of being (social acculturation, acquiring Discourses, joining the literary club)
- Social and political consciousness: problematizing textual and social realities
- Awareness of dynamism of culture and of one's own cultural constructedness

Linguistic

- Lexical, morphological, syntactic, semantic, pragmatic knowledge
- Familiarity with writing system and graphic and organizational conventions
- Awareness of interdependencies at all levels (orthography, lexicon, sentence, paragraph, text)
- Awareness of relationships between oral and written language (including awareness of distinction between medium and mode of expression)
- Familiarity with genres and styles

Cognitive/Metacognitive

- Existing knowledge (schemata)–allowing a person to establish relationships among pieces of information and to predict, infer, and synthesize meaning
  - Declarative knowledge–the 'what'–facts, ideas, stories embedded in cultural contexts
  - Procedural knowledge–the 'how'–strategies for reading, writing, and understanding, also embedded in cultural contexts
- Ability to formulate and discern goals and purposes–including planning, monitoring, and revising–in line with cultural norms
- Ability to create and transform knowledge

Kern, 2000

Defining what we mean by literacy

"[T]he use of socially-, historically-, and culturally-situated practices of creating and interpreting meaning through texts. It entails at least a tacit awareness of the relationships between textual conventions and their contexts of use and, ideally, the ability to reflect critically on those relationships ... It draws on a wide range of cognitive abilities, on knowledge of written and spoken language, on knowledge of genres, and on cultural knowledge" (Kern, 2000, p. 16)

Why *multiliteracies*?

"Dealing with linguistic differences and cultural differences has now become central to the pragmatics of our working, civic, and private lives. Effective citizenship and productive work now require that we interact effectively in multiple languages, multiple Englishes, and communication patterns that more frequently cross cultural, community, and national boundaries... When the proximity of cultural and linguistic diversity is one of the key facts of our time, the very nature of language learning has changed" (New London Group, 1996, p. 64)

Breaking down literacy

Literacy involves ...

- Interpretation (of texts)

- Collaboration (reader-writer)

- Conventions (how texts are written and read)

- Cultural knowledge

- Problem solving

- Reflection & self-reflection

- Language use

"the seven principles can be summarized by the macro-principle:

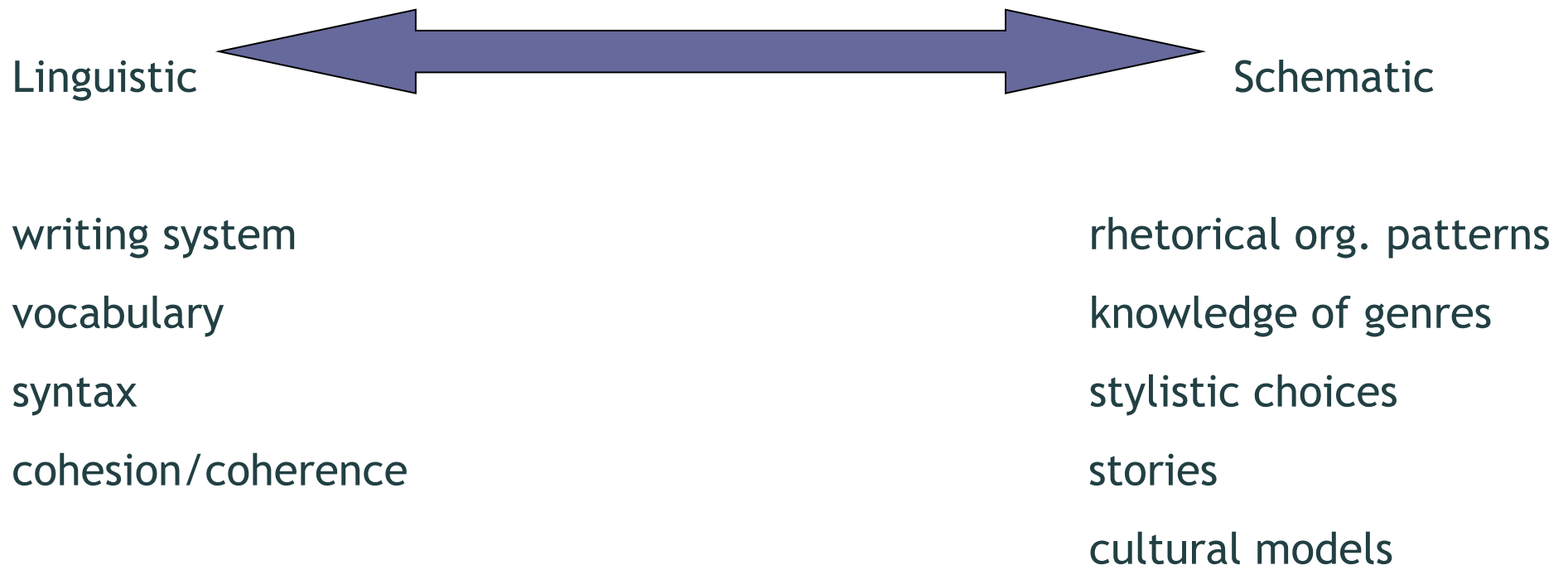*literacy involves communication*" (Kern, 2000, p. 17)

Literacy-oriented instruction entails ...

- Meaning-making or "design of meaning" focused on texts

- Reflecting on form-meaning connections through the "available designs" found in texts

- Focusing on *genre* as a primary instructional consideration (which allows a natural link language<->culture)

- Integrating the various linguistic modalities

Available designs

Available designs: learners' existing knowledge & resources that are drawn on, consciously or unconsciously, in understanding & making meaning from texts

Linguistic ←——————————————→ Schematic

Linguistic	Schematic
writing system	rhetorical org. patterns
vocabulary	knowledge of genres
syntax	stylistic choices
cohesion/coherence	stories
	cultural models

Schematic available designs

Content Schemata: background knowledge as an essential component in textual understanding for beginning learners

Formal Schemata: predictable rhetorical organization make texts accessible to beginning learners

Genre / Style: expectations about content and form as an entry point to various genres

Available designs

Available designs

Available designs

"The Expectation-Maximization algorithm was used to generate maximum likelihood estimates of haplotype frequencies based on the observed genotypes under the assumption of HWE"

Available Designs

- include all resources - linguistic, social, cultural - a reader brings to a text to create meaning

- involve a reader's existing linguistic structures and knowledge resources that are drawn on, consciously or unconsciously, in interpreting texts

- are used by learners to engage in *Designing*, the process of accessing, applying, and recycling known concepts in fresh ways

Reading & writing as acts of meaning design

- dynamic communicative acts, both individual and social; creating discourse from and through texts

- "reading and writing are always socially-imbedded activities involving relationships, shared assumptions, and conventions as well as individual, personal acts involving imagination, creativity, and emotions" (Kern, 2000, p. 111)

- writing in a FL allows learners' language use to go beyond purely functional communication and opens the possibility "to create imagined worlds of their own design" (Kern, 2000, p. 172)

Traditional roles of reading, talking & writing

Reading → Talking → Writing

at home · in class · at home
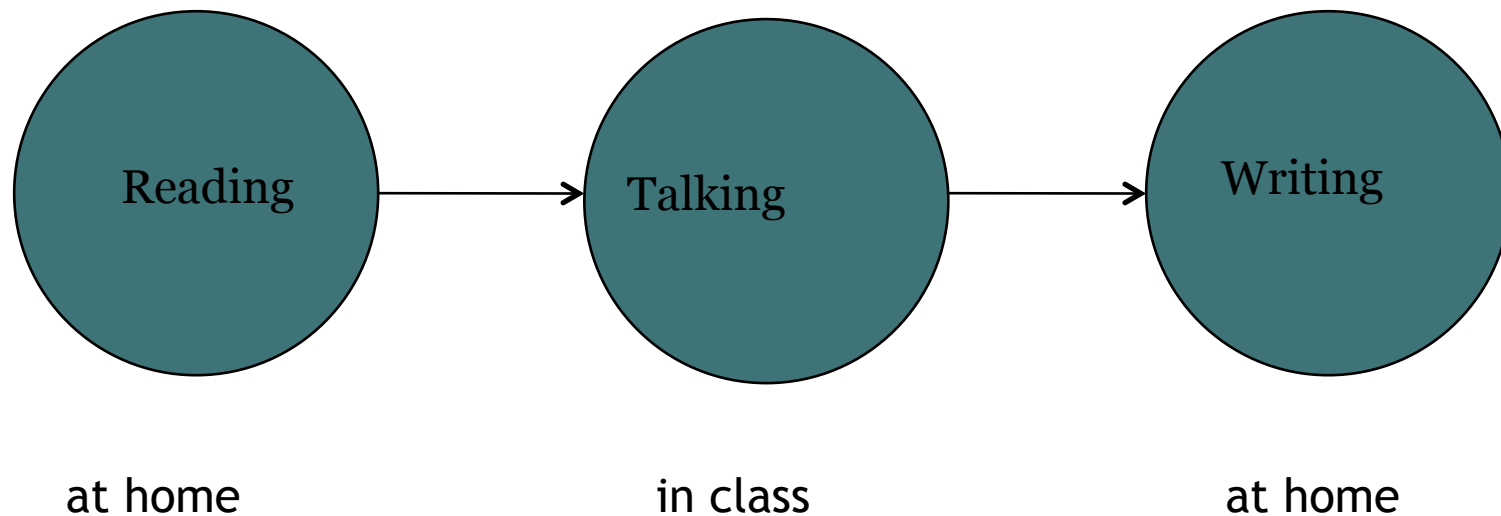
Relationship between reading, writing & talking in a multiliteracies approach



Reading

Writing

Talking
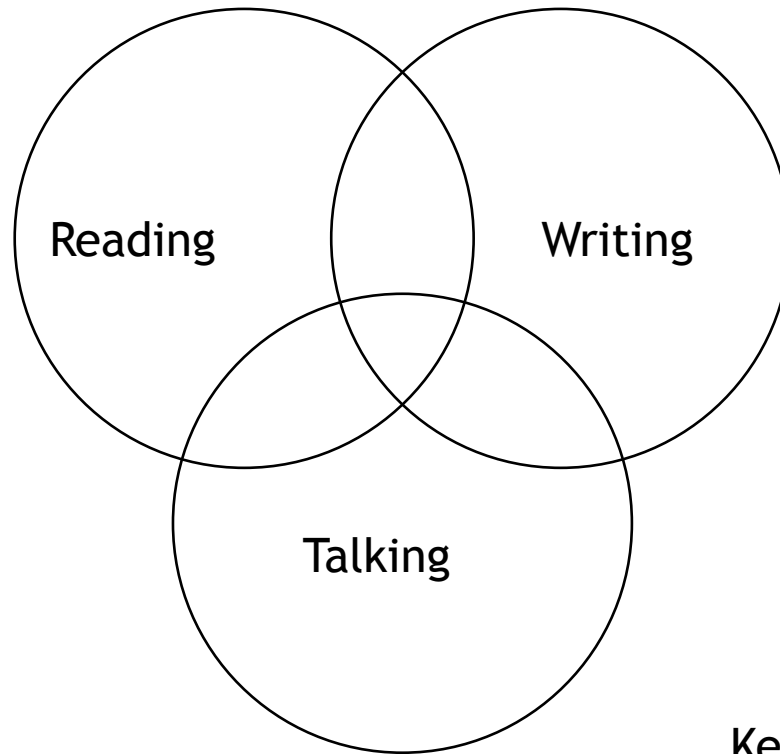
Kern, 2000, p. 132

III. CARRYING OUT THE APPROACH: PEDAGOGICAL PRACTICES

A framework for teaching

- **Four curricular components** (The New London Group, 1996)

"[P]edagogy is a complex integration of four factors: **Situated Practice** based on the world of learners' Designed & Designing experiences; **Overt Instruction** through which students shape for themselves an explicit metalanguage of Design; **Critical Framing** which relates meanings to their social contexts & purposes; and **Transformed Practice** in which students transfer & re-create Designs of meaning from one context to another" (New London Group,1996, p. 83)
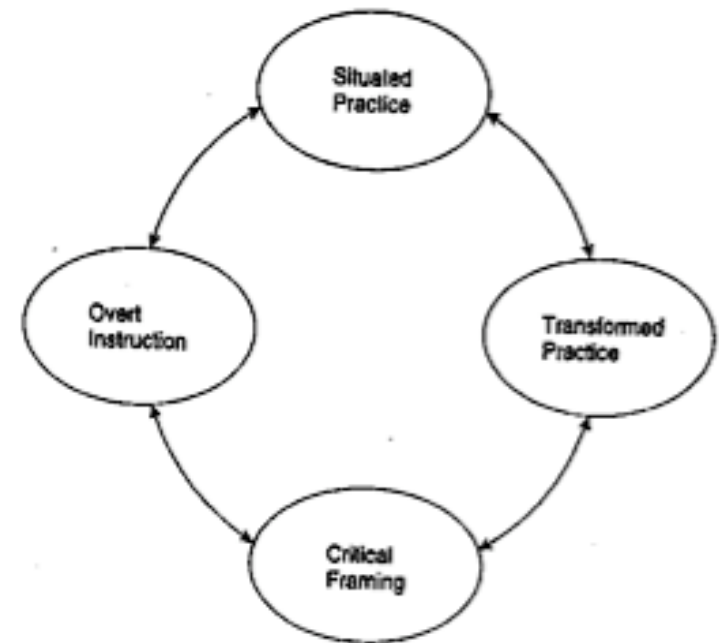
The four curricular components

Situated practice = experiencing; experiential learning without conscious reflection; immersion in language use

Overt instruction = conceptualizing; developing an explicit metalanguage of design through scaffolded activities

Critical framing = analyzing; relating meaning to social contexts and purposes

Transformed practice = applying; application of new understandings, knowledge, and skills to use knowledge and produce language in creative ways; creating new texts on the basis of existing ones

(Cope & Kalantzis, 2009; New London Group

The four curricular components: Example activities

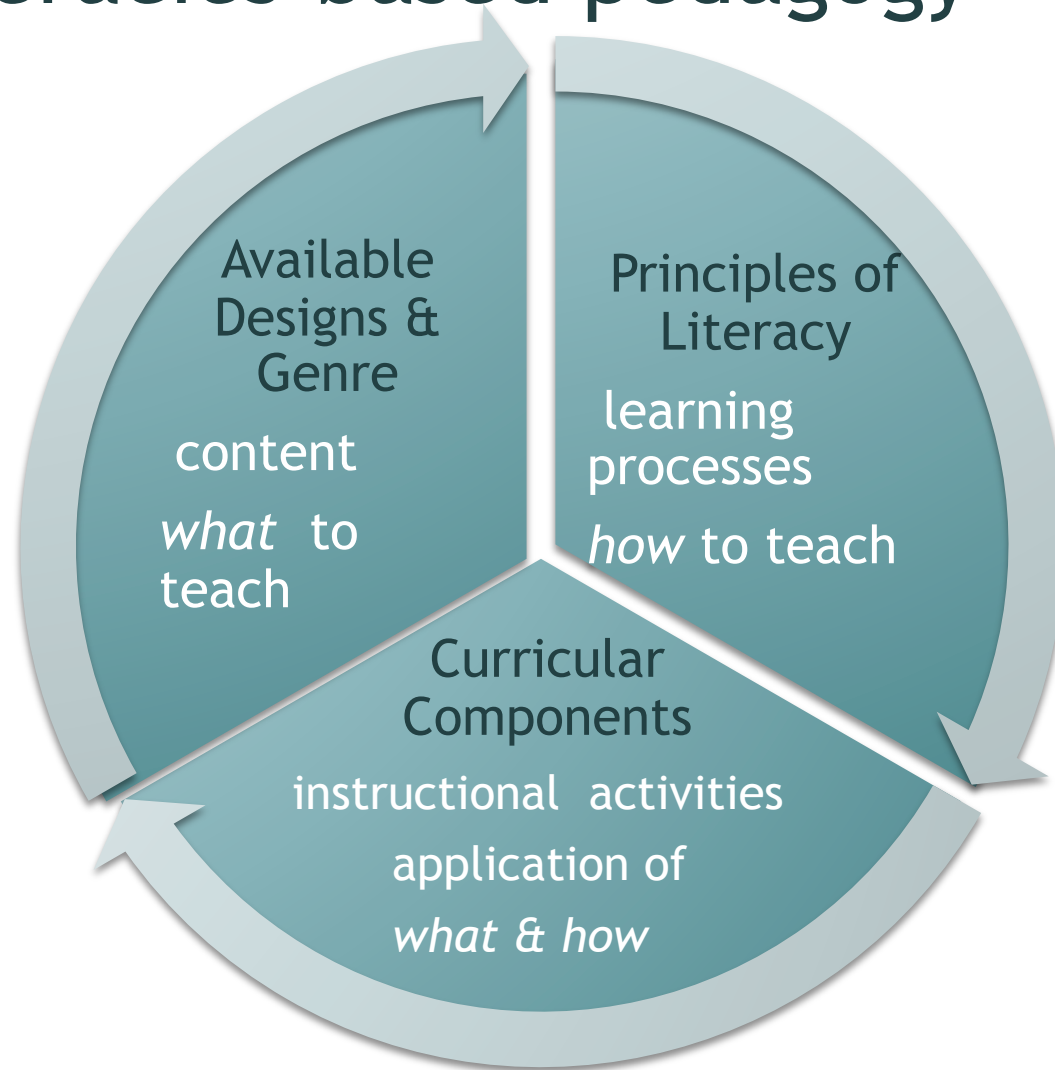| Curricular component	Example activity
Situated practice	paired oral interview, reading journal (written or oral), blog
Overt instruction	text mapping, revising/editing, transcribing/ analyzing activity
Critical framing	research presentation, reflective journaling
Transformed practice	story retelling, genre/point of view reformulation, oral debate

The four curricular components

- Can be used as a framework for teaching a language course, a literature course, a cultural studies course, etc.

- Not a methodology, ie, no necessary order of each component

- Can recur within the same class or overlap

- Relative emphasis on each depends on one's objectives at the level of both the course and at the level of individual classes

- Offer the possibility of coherently linking instruction and assessment

Putting the pieces together: Multiliteracies-based pedagogy

Available Designs & Genre

content

what to teach

Principles of Literacy

learning processes

how to teach

Curricular Components

instructional activities

application of

what & how

IV. EXAMPLES

Example 1: Third-year composition & conversation course

The challenge: How to link a focus on oral language + grammar/composition + content

Objective areas: interpretive/presentational communication; language awareness; cultural/analytic—acquisition of cultural knowledge & drawing cross-cultural comparisons

Primary genre: Francophone films

Secondary genres: literary readings, journalistic texts, video interviews, surveys, etc.

Course organization: 5 modules, thematic/genre-based

Module 1: Childhood & the teacher-student bond

Primary text: Monsieur Lazhar (film)

Secondary texts:
Excerpts, Bashir Lazhar (play)
"Lieux d'enfance" (article Télérama)
Interview with film director (video)
Interview with film director (article)
Dossier de presse for the film
Article on the adaptation from play to film
Article on modern-day Algeria & political tensions there

Day 1: Introduction

Writing to speak activity: Notions of childhood based on personal experience

Information gap reading activity: "Lieu d'enfance" (read/reading matrix, compare, discuss)

From reading to writing activity: Your lieu d'enfance

Pour Olivia Ruiz, c'était chocolat-tartines au comptoir

Mon lieu d'enfance (1/4) | En juillet, quatre personnalités de la culture nous racontent un lieu qui a marqué leur enfance. Cette semaine, la chanteuse Olivia Ruiz et le café de Marseillette.

Le 12/07/2008 à 00h00
Propos recueillis par Valérie Lehoux - Télérama n° 3052

Day 2: "Repères culturels"

Reading journal activity (at home) with "Dossier de presse" & Algeria article

Interview with the director viewing activity (whole class)

Comparison of the same scene from the play & the film (watch silent, watch with sound, watch with sound while taking notes, compare notes on salient features and differences with college)

Discussion of select questions offered by students online for discussion in class

Day 3 & 4: Film viewing

Preparation: lexicon with focus on expressions from Quebec in the film

While-viewing activity: Character studies (5) description, what he/she does, says, other notes

At-home activity (2x): Discussion board posting on the development of relationships among the characters; possible questions for discussion in class

Day 5: Discussion of the film

Student-generated questions divided into 5 categories – characters, relationships, plot, the film's conclusion, generalities

Table with useful expressions for giving an opinion, refuting an opinion, or nuancing an argument

Small group discussion of 2-3 questions related to each category for 6-8 minutes before changing categories (total time 35-40 minutes)

Whole group discussion of 1 question from each category

Day 6: "Outils linguistiques" & writing workshop

Preparation: At-home activities both mechanical & meaningful on relative pronouns and adjectives

In-class comparison of their character sketches with a partner who has worked on the same characters, focus on the use of targeted structures in context

Brainstorming activity: Retelling the story from another point of view—Graphic organizer (my character, the plot, a scene, conclusion)

Features of this module

- Overlapping use of writing-reading-speaking

- Intertextuality (e.g., play/film)

- Focusing on students' own interests vis a vis the texts

- Linking of language & content: Using a focus on form as a tool to do something else

- Linking of instruction & assessment

Example 2 & 3: First-year language course

- The challenges: little meaningful incorporation of literary-cultural content in the textbook; writing seen as a support skill for talking in the textbook

- Objective areas: 3 modes of communication, language awareness, awareness of cultural perspectives and practices of L2 communities

- Course organization: Functional syllabus, first five chapters of elementary French textbook

Example 2

Mange ta soupe…

JEAN COCTEAU

Mange ta soupe. Tiens-toi droit. Mange lentement. Ne mange pas si vite. Bois en mangeant. Coupe ta viande en petits morceaux. Tu ne fais que tordre et avaler. Ne joue pas avec ton couteau. Ce n'est pas comme ça qu'on tient sa fourchette. On ne chante pas à table. Vide ton assiette. Ne te balance pas sur ta chaise. Finis ton pain. Pousse ton pain. Mâche. Ne parle pas la bouche pleine. Ne mets pas tes coudes sur la table. Ramasse ta serviette. Ne fais pas de bruit en mangeant. Tu sortiras de table quand on aura fini. Essuie ta bouche avant de m'embrasser.

Cette petite liste réveille une foule de souvenirs, ceux de l'enfance… C'est très longtemps après qu'on arrive à comprendre qu'un dîner peut être un véritable chef-d'œuvre.

Use of the four curricular components

critical framing	activity comparing US v. France table manners using images (film stills or photography) [secondary emphasis on the available design of vocabulary]
situated practice	read the text & complete a reading matrix-focus on text's themes, who is speaking, who is addressed; compare responses to those of a colleague aloud
overt instruction	-inductive grammatical activity wherein learners are asked to find repeated use of imperative tense in context as well as verbs not in the imperative
transformed practice	-rewrite the story as a dialogue between two people -or rewrite the story based on your own experiences as a child in your own culture

Example 3

situated practice	-partnered oral activity on "état civil" and descriptions of favorite family members -read the article & respond to comprehension check questions
critical framing	-watch a video of French people reacting to this campaign, express your own reaction to this campaign
overt instruction	-rewatch the video of French people reacting to this campaign noting the expressions used to express an opinion "Je trouve" "Je préfère" "J'aime pas du tout"
transformed practice	-journal assignment related to both the reading & communicative functions that are the focus of the chapter