Enhancing the Content of Introductory Courses: A Literacy-Based Approach

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Session Overview

• Brainstorming Activity
• Limitations of Introductory FL Programs
• The Multiliteracies Approach
• Implementing Literacy-Based Modules
• Application Activity
• Implications, Conclusions, and Questions
Brainstorming Activity

• Share two goals of your introductory, intermediate, or advanced language course(s) (e.g., develop grammatical accuracy, expose learners to cultural artifacts, etc.).

• Identify at least one limitation related to implementing the goals you identified (e.g., Does textbook match goals?, Are all goals being met?, Are goals consistent with student needs or interests?, etc.).

• What role do authentic texts (e.g., poetry, music, advertisements, etc.) play in meeting your goals?
Goals of our Introductory French Program

FRE1020 is a four credit elementary French course designed to develop students' skills in listening, speaking, writing and reading, and to increase students' cultural awareness of the French-speaking world. This course is part of the WSU General Education Program, and it may be used to satisfy the Foreign Language Culture Requirement. The University Bulletin states that the Foreign Culture Requirement can be met by "completion of any foreign language through 201 or 211."
Limitations of our Introductory French Program

- Vague instructional goals
  - No clear outcomes defined for “skills in listening, speaking, writing and reading”
  - No definition of “cultural awareness” or how that comes about

- Textbook lacks intellectual rigor and cognitively challenging content
  - Focus on functional language use
  - No deep engagement with target language texts
  - Cultural “vignettes”
Defining Literacy

“Literacy is the 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 these relationships. Because it is purpose-sensitive, literacy is dynamic – not static – and variable across and within discourse communities and cultures. 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)
Defining Literacy

- Literacy-oriented instruction encourages learners to interact with the content of texts
  - Language use
  - Conventions
  - Cultural knowledge
- Through the learning processes of
  - Interpretation
  - Collaboration
  - Problem solving
  - Reflection & Self-reflection

**Pedagogical Acts**
- = instructional activities
- = application of *what* & *how*

**Available Designs & Texts**
- = content
- = *what* to teach

**Principles of Literacy**
- = learning processes
- = *how* to teach
Pedagogical Acts

• **SITUATED PRACTICE** = *experiencing*
  - Spontaneous, experiential learning without conscious reflection
  - Examples: Instructional conversations; Describing images; Brainstorming

• **OVERT INSTRUCTION** = *conceptualizing*
  - Explicit learning / instruction of skills and knowledge needed for competent participation in activities
  - Examples: Finding synonyms; Self-editing of writing
Pedagogical Acts

- **Critical Framing** = *analyzing*
  - Relating meaning to social contexts and purposes
  - Examples: Verifying predictions; Cultural comparisons; Critical focus questions

- **Transformed Practice** = *applying*
  - Application of new understandings, knowledge and skills to use knowledge and produce language in creative ways
  - Examples: Creative writing; Story continuations
Implementation of Literacy-Based Modules

PROJECT GOALS:

1. Develop students’ FL literacy
2. Design and apply instructional activities that move beyond functional language use, increase cultural awareness
3. Integrate authentic FL texts into FRE 1020 that fit with chapter themes
4. Increase instructor involvement in curricular decision making
5. Implement long-term teacher development plan linking theory and practice
Implementation of Literacy-Based Modules

PROJECT TIMELINE:

• Winter 2011: Teacher-learners developed instructional units in a pedagogy seminar on FL literacy

• Summer 2011: Teacher-learners revised instructional units in consultation with instructor/LPD and one another

• Summer 2011: LPD modified FRE 1020 syllabus to incorporate instructional units.

• Fall 2011: Teacher-learners piloted instructional units. LPD and teacher-learners then collaborated to further revise instructional units and composition assignments.

• Winter 2012: All FRE 1020 instructors implemented the finalized instructional units.
Overview of Instructional Unit

• Multi-day unit implemented in the end of a chapter entitled “From Market to Table”

• Includes in-class and out-of-class instructional activities and assessments that are all multiliteracies based

• Three text types
  1. Literary vignette: *Une bulle en terrasse* (Delerm)
  2. Video clip: *Le Café de Paris*
  3. Images of American and French café scenes

• Task types were developed to allow students to interact with texts beyond a basic level of comprehension
Day 1 : Pre-Reading

- **SITUATED PRACTICE** – Students experience the text spontaneously and are oriented to the subject through activation of background knowledge and hypothesizing

- Students *reflect* on their own experiences and perspectives by considering American and French leisure activities

- Students immerse themselves in something new by considering café culture through the content of an unfamiliar text
Day 1 : While Reading

- **Overt Instruction** – students engage with explicit information needed to make form-meaning connections and better understand how ideas are expressed in the text.

- **Situated Practice** – students experience new information in the text through identification of key facts and linking textual meaning to café images.

- **Transformed Practice** – students apply understandings of the text through summarizing.

- Students engage in the learning processes of *interpretation, collaboration, and problem solving*. 
Day 2 : Post-Reading

- **SITUATED PRACTICE** – Students are immersed in spontaneous language use through brainstorming ideas and describing images.

- Students *use language* to participate in authentic activities related to reading and writing texts.

- **CRITICAL FRAMING** – Students step back from the text and analyze its meaning and importance in relation to specific contexts.

- Students *reflect* on their own experiences and make cross-cultural comparisons to understand and raise questions about their own culture.
Day 2: Videotext Viewing

- **SITUATED PRACTICE** – Students experience the meaning of visual images and language presented in the videotext through hypothesizing and description
- Students *reflect* on the meaning of images in the text
- Students *collaborate* to reconstruct the videotext script

- **CRITICAL FRAMING** – Students analyze and critically evaluate cultural representations across text types (images, literary text, videotext)
- Students *interpret* what and how meaning is conveyed in various genres
Assessment: Composition

- **Transformed Practice** – Students apply knowledge of language and culture learned through textual interpretation in a creative writing task that encourages exploration of their interests and experiences.

- Students *reflect* critically on French and American culture.

- Students *collaborate* with peers to create and revise textual content.
Application Activity

• Revisit one of the limitations you identified in the brainstorming activity related to the goals of your language course(s).

• Brainstorm ways you might use authentic texts to help overcome this limitation based on the framework and examples presented in this session.
Conclusions and Implications

- Reading, writing, speaking, listening as complementary modalities that develop FL literacy

- Increased cognitive demands through inclusion of critical framing and transformed practice activities

- Deeper engagement with FL texts through interpretation of textual meaning, discovery of form-meaning connections, and analysis of cultural content

- Students are better prepared for future FL study

- Instructors see clearer links between teaching and scholarship, language, and literature instruction
Future Directions

- Integration of literacy-based modules in remaining introductory courses
- Fuller integration with assessment practices
- Instructor professional development related to literacy-based instruction
- Communication with faculty beyond introductory courses
QUESTIONS? COMMENTS?

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