

PRAGMATICS & LT

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Discourse & macroskills

- Discourse is not a separate skill; it is part of achieving communicative competence
- We talk about methods we use to integrate discourse in the skills
- We discuss problems students have in each skill; and provide strategies that should be encouraged when teaching each skill in context

LT = (sub) + skills

- Vocabulary
- Reading & Writing
- Listening & Speaking

Vocabulary

- Vocabulary learning involves use of both top-down & bottom-up strategies
- Bottom up strategies refer to utilizing the meaning of words based on syntax and morphology
- Top down refers to the vocabulary associated with specific topics or situations, or genres

- Vocabulary learning involves receptive & productive vocabulary
- It is believed receptive vocabulary assists comprehension and reading
- It eventually becomes productive vocabulary
- Speaking requires the least vocabulary whereas writing requires more vocabulary
- Listening and reading require a lot of receptive vocabulary
- Speaking and writing require productive vocabulary

Vocabulary & Discourse

- Vocabulary is genre based
- It differs in spoken and written language
- Questions of who is speaking to whom, what is the topic and the formality of language affect vocabulary selection
- Register or field specific vocabulary
- Newspapers may employ different sets of words dependent on the genre they use/employ

Teaching vocabulary through discourse

- Narratives, poems, plays → help students in understanding metaphorical meaning of words and contextual use
- Use of 'well', 'oh', 'you know' from discourse perspective.
- Cartoons+spoken language
- Comparing Interactive role plays of various language functions (e.g. the repetitive use of apologizing in the Japanese context vs the single apology in English).
- Vocabulary should be taught in context and using a variety of texts;
- Association with specific formality, politeness and genre should be emphasized

But,

- Beginning learners may not learn vocabulary through discourse based activities → other strategies e.g. pictures, flash cards, word associations, translation, imagery
- Vocabulary is seen to develop differently in every learner despite their same exposure to English; students interested in sports will have a different vocabulary compared to students interested in films
- Teachers should spend time instructing students in their use of dictionaries
- Teachers often emphasize the use of monolingual dictionaries, however, bilingual dictionaries may be useful in identifying the exact meaning of a word which cannot be captured in a monolingual dictionary;
- The most important thing is that dictionaries should have examples of language in context

Checklist for teachers:

- Cognates: does this item exist in the students' L1?
- Is the syntax and morphology different or similar?
- Are there any pronunciation difficulties?
- Does the new word appear in collocations/in specific combinations?
- What are some contexts and texts that it is likely to occur?
- Are there idiomatic use of this item?

Reading

- Reading involves interaction between reader, writer and text
- Psycholinguistic approach to reading discusses the cognitive aspects students bring into reading, schema theory, prior knowledge
- ➔ Bottom up and top down approaches to reading
- Bottom up: a series of stages proceeding in a fixed order
- Top down: Interpretation process as a continuum of changing hypotheses about the incoming information, prior knowledge
- Effective readers use both approaches simultaneously: interactive reading
- Different texts require different combination of elements: metacognitive awareness, bottom up, top down processing, prior knowledge, reading strategies

Students' difficulties in reading

- Sometimes global or cultural knowledge can prevent interpretation
- –The picnic was ruined. No one brought a corkscrew
- Lack of awareness of Cohesive devices
- Unfamiliar Genre of the text
- Solutions:
- Teachers should encourage students to ask questions like “where did the text appear? what is the purpose? What do we know about the author?”
- Too much reliance on either bottom up or top down processing may be a problem: they need to work together
- ➔ Coherence and cohesion in reading
- Important bottom up elements that assist in the interpretation of texts
- Students should be alerted at the different cohesion patterns texts have and cross cultural conventions of different genres
- Texts that have cohesion do not necessarily have coherence
- –A cat is sitting on the fence. A fence is often made of wood. Carpenters work with wood. Wood planks can be bought from a lumber store

Writing

- Genre teaching and coherence and cohesion are important parts of teaching writing'
- Contrastive rhetoric which compares genres and texts in different cultures is important in drawing students awareness of different conventions in writing
- Students must practice different types of writing, various genres, different contexts and real life situations
- Writing must have real life goals and specific communicative contexts and move beyond writing for learning purposes or for the teacher
- Other top down approaches to writing
- One possible way of teaching writing is through reading and examples ; providing samples of the same genre and text
- Ask questions such as what is the message of the text;why certain structures appear here and not elsewhere? What is the organisation of the text?
- Sometimes it is good to get students to start writing to liberate them from writing inhibitions without following conventions and as they develop competence then emphasise register and style or even pay attention to grammar

Next: Listening & Speaking
Thank you