

Teaching Language Through Content in Projects

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Objectives:

- Brainstorm motivating activities to build background knowledge.
- Match aspects of language definitions with examples and teaching strategies.
- Analyze a project product to determine the language demands and supports needed for different aspects of language.
- Review activities to focus on teaching content through an aspect of language.

Motivating Activities (Hooks)

- Create a Common Experience
- Build background knowledge and interest in a topic
- Introduce the big ideas and core concepts through something that is hands-on and accessible
- Can be used to add on the academic language later

Motivating Activities Examples

- **Simulations** (French Revolution, Jim Crow, chemical reaction)
- **Videos**—high graphics, low language (digestive system, volcanic eruption, traffic accident, scene from a movie)
- **Pictures/Artifacts/Realia** (architecture, wrapping a gift with paper)
- **Field Trips and Guest Speakers**

Extract Language from Content

Once you have students interested...

- Ask them to use social language to describe what they experienced.
- Academic language can be added on to help students make sense of what they experienced.

Aspects of Language

| ASPECT | EXPLANATION |
|-------------------------|--|
| PHONOLOGY | Letters and sounds |
| MORPHOLOGY | Smallest units of language with meaning |
| SEMANTICS | Word meanings (vocabulary) |
| SYNTAX | Word order and meaning in sentences |
| DISCOURSE | Understanding bigger chunks of text |
| PRAGMATICS | Social language—using language to effectively communicate |
| META-LINGUISTICS | Using language to analyze and talk about language |

Start with the End First

- What do you want students to produce to show you that they've "got" it?
- What are the content and language demands of that task?

Example Projects

| Subject | Project |
|---------|--|
| ELA | <p>Create and publish a video and written cooking recipe online. Include an introduction that compares this food with other cultures and your connection with the food. Follow a classmate's recipe and comment on it online.</p> <p>Create a YouTube video of examples of a “good” and “bad” job interview. Include tips for the interview process in your video.</p> |
| History | Write a letter from the perspective of a mill girl working in Lowell, MA during the industrial Revolution. |
| Biology | Write a narrative script and create a video describing an environmental change leads to a change in population of moths. (Yiran Gu, Charlestown High School) |
| Math | Evaluate witness testimony of an traffic accident given velocity graphs for two involved cars. |

Analyzing a Project for Language Demands

- In groups, you will choose to review a project product and analyze it for language demands.
- Focusing Questions:
 - What are motivating activities that could create entry points for students to this topic?
 - What aspects of language does this product demand of the student? In terms of language, what will be difficult for students to produce this?
 - What language activities, teaching strategies and scaffolds can be used to practice different aspects of language this product demands?

Strategies for Teaching Different Aspects of Language

| Teaching Strategy | Aspect of Language |
|--|-----------------------------|
| 1. Scripts and Model Texts and Sentence Frames | Discourse, Syntax |
| 2. Word and Sentence Play Manipulatives | Syntax, Morphology |
| 3. Barrier Pictures | Semantics, Syntax |
| 4. Academic and Social Language Matching | Metalinguistics, Pragmatics |

Questions?