Using Authentic Literature to Build Language Skills

MPAEA & CAEPA
Mile High Rendezvous 2006

Connie Davis, Northern Colorado Literacy Resource Center,
nclrc@stvrain.k12.co.us

Juli Lamb, Front Range Community College, Boulder Campus,
julie.lamb@frontrange.edu

The power of reading

- Research by Krashen provides *empirical proof* for what we teachers already know…
- …that reading improves
  - Vocabulary
  - Spelling
  - Grammar
  - Writing style

Why???

- Language is too complex to be learned one rule or word at a time
- Language acquisition comes from input, NOT output
  - comprehension, NOT production

Vocabulary

- Can be acquired by reading
- Synonyms do not adequately represent the meaning of a word
  - differences between *say* and *tell*
- Subtle nuances can't be conveyed by memorizing lists
  - homeless vs. vagrant
- Reading 1M words per year = several thousand word growth

Spelling

- Reading improves spelling
- No instruction necessary
- Direct spelling instruction ineffective

Grammar

- Mastery of the relative clause
- Mastery of grammatical properties
  - transitivity/intransitivity
  - common collocations
  - prepositions:“married to” vs. “married with”
  - arguments: “The burglar lurked” requires a “where”
- Direct instruction ineffective

Writing

- Writing style comes from reading, NOT from writing
  - Subconsciously absorbed and acquired
- More writing ≠ better writing
- Writing does have other virtues
  - Think through and solve problems
  - Clarify and stimulate thinking

General knowledge

- Those who read more, know more
- Readers performed better on tests of
  - History
  - Literature
  - Cultural and practical knowledge
  - Science
  - Social studies
  - TOEFL

Critical thinking & reasoning

- “Good thinkers” are good readers
- “Creative people” are good readers
- “Successful adults” are good readers

As if that weren't enough….

- Reading is fun!!

- But why use authentic literature?
- Can't I just use newspapers and magazines?

Why use authentic literature?

- Research by Baycich shows that authentic literature:
  - ensures continued use of literacy outside the classroom.
  - students show more improved literacy practices than did students in skill-based classes.
    - skill instruction was embedded in the context of the real-life materials.
  - if the goal is to increase literacy use outside of class, then authentic literacy instruction should be used.

Why use authentic literature?

- Students learn communicative competence involving interpreting discourse in all its social and cultural contexts. (Savvidou)

- Volunteers and teachers who had worked with some of the students in past years cried as they read what the students wrote. Many of them came up to me in utter disbelief at the gains the students made in such a short time. (Bassoff)

Why use authentic literature?

- Research by Nixon-Ponder shows that authentic literature:
  - sparks an interest that workbooks and basals cannot.
  - fosters
    - critical-thinking skills
    - love of reading
  - stimulates students to
    - attend class more regularly
    - go to the library on their own time
    - discuss books, plots, characters
    - relate these to their own personal lives
    - become leaders among their peers

Why use authentic literature?

- Nixon-Ponder also found:
- “I never thought it would have this kind of impact on our students. It was an awakening that there is so much to learn, to explore that was of interest to them.”
- Finding books that are appropriate and stimulating for adults is the key.

What's wrong with these?

- We take your bags and send them in all directions.
  - Copenhagen airline ticket office
- Would you like to ride on your own ass?
  - Advertisement for donkey rides in Thailand
- You are invited to take advantage of the chambermaid
  - Japanese hotel

From Savvidou

Vocabulary Activities

- Vocabulary Preview
- Semantic Web
  - Association Process
    - Connecting words to each other
    - Enhances memory of meaning
    - Enhances retrieval
    - Opposites DON’T attract

Vocabulary Activities

- Merry Families Card Game
- Family Resemblances
- Synonym Web
- Categories

Resources: Wordnet

WordNet Search - 2.1 - Microsoft Internet Explorer

File Edit View Favorites Tools Help

Back Search Favorites

Address http://wordnet.princeton.edu/perl/webwn Go Links

WordNet Search - 2.1

Return to WordNet Home

Glossary - Help

SEARCH DISPLAY OPTIONS: (Select option to change) Change

Enter a word to search for: perfect Search WordNet

KEY: "S:" = Show Synset (semantic) relations, "W:" = Show Word (lexical) relations

Noun

- S: (n) perfective, perfective tense, **perfect**, perfect tense (a tense of verbs used in describing action that has been completed (sometimes regarded as perfective aspect))

Verb

- S: (v) **perfect**, hone (make perfect or complete) *"perfect your French in Paris!"*

Adjective

- S: (adj) **perfect** (being complete of its kind and without defect or blemish) *"a perfect circle"; "a perfect reproduction"; "perfect happiness"; "perfect manners"; "a perfect specimen"; "a perfect day"*
- S: (adj) arrant, complete, consummate, double-dyed, everlasting, gross, **perfect**, pure, sodding, stark, staring, thoroughgoing, utter, unadulterated (without qualification; used informally as (often pejorative) intensifiers) *"an arrant fool"; "a complete coward"; "a consummate fool"; "a double-dyed villain"; "gross negligence"; "a perfect idiot"; "pure folly"; "what a sodding mess"; "stark staring mad"; "a thoroughgoing villain"; "utter nonsense"; "the unadulterated truth"*
- S: (adj) **perfect** (precisely accurate or exact) *"perfect timing"*

Done Internet

Resources: AWL Generators

The AWL Gapmaker - Microsoft Internet Explorer

File Edit View Favorites Tools Help

Back Search Favorites

Address http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/~alzsh3/acvocab/awlgapmaker.htm Go Links

ACADEMIC VOCABULARY

AW L AWL AWL AWL AWL AWL AWL AWL AWL AWL AWL AWL AWL AWL AWL AWL AWL AWL AWL AWL AWL AWL AWL AWL AWL AWL

- Home
- Learning
- AWL Highlighter
- AWL Gapmaker
- Teaching
- Word Lists
- Texts
- Exercises
- Concordances
- Links

The AWL Gapmaker

This program will create a gapfill exercise, using the Academic Word List. Type or paste your text into the box below. Select the sublist level you want to use. In this program each level includes all the previous levels i.e. level 5 includes levels 1 to 4 as well. Also select if you want the list of extracted words displayed at the end of the page. Click on submit. The text will be returned as a new web page with words from the Academic Word List, at the levels selected, replaced by a gap. This may take a few moments.

The text box can process a maximum of 2400 characters. Any extra will be ignored.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

List No List

Done Internet

Grammar Activities

- Collocations
- Irregular verbs pin the tail on the donkey
- Sentence scramble – Letter Tiles
  - Whole words
  - 3 letters per card

Writing Activities

- Whowhatwherewhenwhy
- Complete the Story
- Sequencing
- Abstraction Poems
- Collaborative Writing
- Discussion Prompts
- Writing Sentences/Paragraphs
- Homophones

Other Activities

- Self-Generated Language – sequence of events
- Graphic organizers
  - Family
- Listening skills: Read-alouds, cloze activities
- Acting, Miming

Let's Share

- Ideas
- Experiences
- Thoughts about applications to your classes and situations

Conclusion

- Using authentic literature:
  - Increases chances of life-long reading
  - Improves literacy practices
  - Improves communicative practices
  - Sparks students' interests
  - Stimulates connections to students' lives
  - Fosters critical-thinking skills and LOVE OF READING
  - Empowers students

Conclusion

- Authentic Literature:
  - Easy to use
  - Wide range of activities
- Kinesthetic activities: vocabulary, grammar, writing, and others
- Kinesthetic and playful Activities
  - highly effective
  - learning “sticks”